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A Phenomenological Study of the International Student Experience at an American College

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A Phenomenological Study of the International Student Experience at an American
College

by
Julie Anderson Exposito

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University
2015

Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Julie Anderson Exposito under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This proposal represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

Where another author's ideas have been presented in this proposal, I have acknowledged the author's ideas by citing them in the required style.

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Signature

Julie Anderson Exposito

Name

March 15, 2014

Date

Acknowledgments

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

–Tzu

One step started my doctoral journey and has led me over grassy plains, lonely mountains, and at times, raging waterfalls. The warnings that I was given of the lonely and isolating dissertation journey still resonates with me, and albeit true, once I completed this journey, I realized it was not the final destination that is transformational, but rather the journey within ourselves. This journey to accomplish goals and dreams was a feat of endurance and supplied me with a new destination never anticipated before I ventured down the path. But alas, this journey could not have been possible without the ardent support of loved ones.

First, I would like to thank my husband, Joel Exposito, for being the pillar of support during my triumphs and defeats and for encouraging me through each step of the journey. I dedicate this study to you; thank you for walking next to me on the rocky paths and at times, carrying me over the turbulent waters. Without your love and support, this would not have been possible. I also dedicate this study to my children, Isabella and Analía Exposito, whom I love more than life itself. This is my legacy to you both to remember that anything is possible if you have the desire. Life is a wonderful journey that begins with one small step, and with each step, you can achieve any dreams of your heart. Thank you, Isabella and Analía, for your understanding, enthusiasm, and interest in this shared journey during your young lives.

I would also like to dedicate this study to my parents and lifelong role models, Bruce and Evangalyn Anderson. Your unconditional love and support molded me and

prepared me for this great undertaking; I thank you for believing in me, encouraging me, and pushing me to be my personal best. You provided the foundation necessary for successfully completing this journey; a foundation built on dedication, discipline, and commitment. I would like to thank my family and friends, who encouraged me and remained loyal and generous in their unwavering support, even when I disappeared from their paths. Thank you for your understanding and friendship. I would also like to thank the nine participants who were my inspiration and who dedicated their time to guide this study with their stories.

I thank my dissertation committee member, Dr. Gretchen Donndelinger, who I met while presenting at the 2015 Conference on Global Leadership, Learning, and Research. Thank you for the engaging discussions and the continued guidance, support, and feedback. Finally, this journey would not have been possible without a great dissertation chair and mentor, Dr. David B. Ross. He is an exemplary educator and collaborator who invests in his students. Thank you for sharing your infinite knowledge and experience with me. I am indebted to you for the guidance and encouragement through the doctoral coursework and dissertation process. “No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge . . . [the teacher] leads you to the threshold of your own mind” (Gibran). You have influenced me and transformed me to realize my greatest reward from this journey is not the destination, but the journey I took to get there; it is my transformation of how I work and think.

Abstract

A Phenomenological Study of the International Student Experience at an American College. Julie Anderson Exposito, 2015: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. ERIC Descriptors: Culture, Social Experience, Academic Experience, International Students, Immigrants, English Language Learners, Higher Education, Qualitative Research

This applied dissertation was designed to explore and provide a better understanding of students of international background enrolled in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at a 4-year public American college in Southeast Florida. This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological design for data collection and analysis. The interview protocol was reviewed and verified by a panel of experts. The data collection took place in the fall of 2014; the researcher utilized an open-ended interview protocol with purposeful sampling of nine international students. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. The participants checked the transcripts for accuracy of the recorded data. An analysis of the data revealed common themes of the international students' educational experience in American institutions of higher education. The interviews of the participants allowed the researcher to better understand the international student's lived experiences.

The qualitative research created an awareness of the social and academic experiences of international students at an American college. The researcher concluded that the types of experiences are varied among the participants from the three different world regions, yet there was a high consistency of the themes: learning and studying, perception of faculty, expedited learning, online learning, language and communication issues, and a lack of social interaction with native students. There are ramifications for educators for strategic instructional practice and school leadership to seek and enhance

student engagement and intercultural competencies. It will become necessary to increase cultural competencies through diversity initiatives both within the curriculum and throughout institutions by better understanding students' perceptions and including those from various backgrounds, cultures, genders, and religions. To conclude, recommendations for future research are provided.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Phenomenon of interest. Globalization has and will influence all aspects of higher education (Flynn & Vredevoogd, 2010). The current trend of globalization has influenced the demographics in higher educational institutions. Many higher education institutions compete in a global academic marketplace, both locally and internationally. With the increase in globalization, Smith (2011) mentioned that international diversity may be substituted for domestic diversity where international issues bring a diverse perspective to a formerly American centered perspective.

American colleges have partnerships with international institutions that offer study abroad opportunities and educational partnerships. Colleges serve the growing global student population at home institutions and provide global educational opportunities for local students to study abroad, connecting students to local and global communities. The increase in international students at American colleges and universities substantiates a need to understand the international student experience, which will aid colleges in better integrating international students in American colleges. In understanding the international student's lived experiences at American colleges, educators can gain deeper cultural perspectives and incorporate culturally responsive instruction to enhance international student engagement.

Trahar and Hyland (2011) found that there was a lack of support, resources, and recognition for innovative teaching and assessment practices in environments that are culturally complex. In order for educators to be more effective, they need to have a more thorough understanding of their students and the cultural impacts on their learning styles,

as their methodology should equally involve the local student and the international student (Spiro, 2011). Leask and Carroll (2011) confirmed that both formal and informal curriculum is effective in enhancing the local and international students' experience in creating a global perspective. Participants in mixed cultural groups (i.e., local, international) felt they had improved cross-cultural communication skills, and were more prone to work and socialize with people from different cultures (Leask & Carroll, 2011). However, Volet and Ang (2012) found that even though both local and international students realized that their initial bias toward one another was not accurate and had positive mixed group experiences, students would still not choose to join culturally mixed groups in the future. Volet and Ang concluded that interaction between local and international students was limited, and became more negative with more time spent in the university.

There is a variance of reasons for immigrating to the United States; some which include continuing education, improving economic status, and/or seeking political asylum. In 2013, there was a 7.2% growth of international students in the United States as 49% were international students from China, India, and South Korea, with China sending the highest number of students (Institute of International Education, 2013). Past studies indicate social adjustment is the greatest challenge for international students (Dao, Donghyuck, & Chang, 2007; Klomegah, 2006; Novera, 2004).

The Institute of International Education (IIE) conducted a series of surveys in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America to explore the reasons why students enter a U.S. institution of higher education (Chow, 2013). The study examined courses of study and barriers students encounter. There were 9,330 responses gleaned over a 2-year period.

Three-quarters of respondents reported the United States higher education system is of high quality, and includes an expansive list of institutions and programs. Over two-thirds of students felt the United States welcomed international students. However, 49% of respondents felt the cost of attending school with a student visa was high and that the United States had difficult student visa procedures. Gaining acceptance to the institutions was another difficulty (Chow, 2013). On a global level, international students experience both linguistic and cultural adjustment issues. Tananuraksakul and Hall (2011) conducted a study in Australia examining English language performance and its effects on international students' psychological well-being. In the study, students experience adjustment issues when there is greater distance between home and host culture. On the other hand, Tananuraksakul and Hall claimed students will have an easier transition if maintaining a positive attitude.

The topic. Student learning styles and preferences vary in higher education and among different cultures. Student mobility (i.e., relocation, immigration) has increased the number of international students with unique needs and varying cross-cultural perspectives at American colleges. Reasons of mobility include political asylum, a quest for economic stability, and/or quality education. The intent of this study is to explore the academic and social cross-cultural experiences of international students at an American community college.

The research problem. Smith (2011) cautioned against looking singly at race, class, and gender; rather look at the interaction of various groups. Students will need to build their cross-culture competencies and changes need to be made to promote intercultural empathy, understanding, and acceptance (Smith, 2011; Volet & Ang, 2012);

a need exists for reflective practice, strategic approaches, activities, and interventions where interaction between culturally mixed groups could be a positive experience (Leask & Carroll, 2011; Volet & Ang 2012). Affirmation of students' cultural identities is reinforced by teaching strategies and programs that engage students' racial/ethnic backgrounds in a positive manner (Tierney, 1992). There is a great impact of diversity in higher education, and it is important for stakeholders to engage in diversity and/or multiculturalism activities at a professional and individual level (Schuh, Jones, Harper, & Associates, 2011). Paths of cultural literacy through international educational service-learning could foster intercultural collaboration.

There is an increase in global student mobility as international students contribute to the dynamics of the American college classroom. American colleges are welcoming international students because of the financial benefits: financial aid and international fees. It is a serious problem that the academic and social needs of international students are not being met in American colleges. Even though the proposed site for this study has an open admissions policy, students experience difficulties in the application process, transcription of credits, and satisfaction of college requirements.

Some students left their native country seeking political asylum in the United States. Often, these students enter the college with degrees from their home country. But in order to receive necessary licensure to continue their profession, they must complete the English program at the proposed site before starting mainstream course requirements. Many times, students opt to start over by following a new course of study in order to receive financial aid. At the proposed site, international students face academic and social challenges. Students express linguistic, social, and cultural adjustment issues, and

claim a lack of language practice with people of the local culture heightens feelings of isolation.

There are a dearth of qualitative studies of this population, and the research does not explore the international student's experience in a community college (Anayah, 2012). Since clear comprehensive understanding is needed, the proposed study will explore the unique lived experiences of students of international background so that administrators, staff, and faculty can better understand international students in American colleges.

Background and justification. Global migration affects the individual and the community, and as globalization increases, there is a need to continue to understand this complex experience and to explore the impact of acculturation on the overall health and well-being of the immigrant (Acculturation, 2011). Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2014), new international student enrollment increased 6.5 % in 2011-2012 from the previous year. There has been an increase in enrollment of international students over the past ten years; it increased from 547,867 international students in 2000-2001 to 764,495 in 2011-2012. In 2013, international student enrollment increased 13% from the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2013). This trend of student globalization has increased cultural differences in higher education, warranting investigation of international student learning styles and preferences, culturally mixed student interaction, and student-teacher engagement in the classroom. College students are from a great range of cultural backgrounds, and the impact of events elsewhere in the world affect how people learn in a specific environment (Bourn, 2011).

College students enrolled in intensive English for Academic Purpose (EAP)

programs often feel culturally and linguistically isolated from the mainstream student body. Russell, Rosenthal, and Thomson (2010) identified a concern for the academic needs of international students, especially reaching levels of English language proficiency appropriate for participation in mainstream university studies. Students enrolled in the English for Academic Purposes report a lack of administrative support with few resources for social, emotional, and academic situations, and students were not satisfied with the academic counseling received (Anayah, 2012). Caruana (2010) found that academic staff struggled when working with culturally diverse groups. Although there is evidence of their poor impact, staff used ineffective strategies with such groups. Studies show that there is a discrepancy between what international students believe in, want, and actually do to learn, and support geared at knowledge of students' learning patterns may help them develop their way of learning (Leask & Carroll, 2011). These findings suggest a need to examine the experiences of international students, so college faculty and staff can partner with students to create a setting that fosters student success.

Deficiencies in the evidence. Research within the United States regarding the integration paradox has been rare (van Doorn, Scheepers, & Dagevos, 2013) and has only described a relationship between education and perceived discrimination. Despite the research and evidence that emphasizes the importance of the international student experience, Trahar and Hyland (2011) illustrated how students of diverse cultures fail to interact both within the classroom and on campus. Bourn (2011) conjectured that the trend of globalization and internationalization affects both the home student and the international student. Cross-cultural educational experiences for local and international college students could enhance the college experience and create a more global

perspective for all students involved; many advocates (Bennett, 1998; Sikema & Niyekawa, 1987) recommend learning environments where students have exposure to cultures other than their own. Volet and Ang (2012) reported a lack of research-based evidence of the interaction between local and international students, and of the success of culturally mixed programs. Andrade (2006) claimed international students make valuable educational contributions, and universities must become more knowledgeable about international student adjustment issues to create appropriate support services.

Research does not address the adjustment of the international student in an American college that serves a local community from a cross-cultural perspective. Most cross-cultural research (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999) and adaptation of international students to higher education (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008) did not take the concept of academic adjustment into consideration (Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdreit, & Kommers, 2012). It also does not consider the cultural component in students' social and academic experiences, so cross-cultural researchers can make use of future studies of social, emotional, and academic needs of international students within a community college setting. Russell, Rosenthal, and Thomson (2010) contended that with targeted support, international students are more likely to experience increased satisfaction and well-being during their time of study by strengthening their connectedness and self-confidence within both study and social settings.

There is a need to further understand the students' social and academic college experience, as being grounded in Hofstede's (1980) and Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) cultural dimensions theory, so students, staff, and faculty can work within mixed

cultural groups. Trahar and Hyland (2011) explored the perceptions of home students, international students, and academics at the university level, and found that there was a lack of support and resources in environments that are culturally complex. These findings suggest a need to examine the phenomenon at the community college level. The research does not address the adjustment of the international student in a community college from a cross cultural perspective.

Trahar and Hyland (2011) also found the majority of university instructors were sensitive to different cultural backgrounds of their students. Sensitivity did not extend into the teaching practices; therefore, they suggested that work in this area should continue to focus on all students and staff. Instructors would benefit from training and be ready to receive and impart academic and cultural knowledge. The concepts of student interaction, involvement, and international student engagement contributes to the student experience, but the student experience has not clearly been defined (Burdett & Crossman, 2012; Owens & Loomes, 2010). Museus and Quayle (2009) emphasized the need of considering new perspectives of minority college student persistence in higher education research. Understanding the international student experience has global implications for higher education. Literature examines the international student at the university level at universities located outside of the United States, but it does not include exploration of the social and academic experiences of the international student in a community college in the United States. The proposed study will provide exploration of the phenomenon of the international student's experience at an American community college.

Audience. By examining the social and academic experience of the international student at a community college, administrators and faculty members can better

understand the international student's experience, and create a positive academic environment that bridges the gap between a student's native educational experience and the hosting academic institutional experience.

Definition of Terms

Several terms are defined as used in this study.

Acculturation. Berry (2005) defined acculturation as a process involving both psychological and cultural change between two cultural groups; the changes occur in both groups, but usually the dominant group changes less than the other. This process includes an initial contact, a conflict resolution phase, and an adaptation phase, which could include assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization.

Culture. A culture includes shared experiences, knowledge, expectations, beliefs, and perceptions of a group (McLeish, 1993).

Cultural identity. Cultural identity is a social construction that gives a particular meaning to the individual or to a collective group.

Cultural sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity is the awareness of cultural factors within a diverse population, and the understanding of the perceptions of a cultural group different from one's own (Cultural Sensitivity and Case Study, 2010, p. 269).

English as a Second Language. English as a Second Language (ESL) are second language learners whose backgrounds are other than English, and whose English language proficiency is not developed enough for instruction only in English (August & Shanahan, 2006).

English for Academic Purpose students. Students enrolled in the English for Academic Purpose (EAP) program that prepares non-native English speaking students for

college mainstream classes.

Ethnic identity. Ethnic identity implies the existence of a common ancestry.

Globalization. In the past, globalization has been defined in terms of an economic world market, but due to the increase in technology, it is now viewed as a political and cultural phenomenon. For the purpose of this paper, globalization will address the cultural exchange between societies.

International students. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the student enrolled in a college who came from a different cultural, linguistic, or ethnic background with limited exposure to the local culture or who obtained a student visa to study in a foreign country.

Internationalization. For the purpose of this study, internationalization and globalization will be used interchangeably to address the social and cultural exchange between societies, not the political or economic factors that drive internationalism or globalization. In the context of higher education, Knight (2004) believed internationalization is the intercultural integration in teaching and service functions of the institution.

Immigrant. For the purpose of this study, an immigrant is someone who has come to the United States to seek permanent residence.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an approach offering a rich account of participant's experiences. IPA gathers descriptive stories, and explores the emotions of the participant (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012).

Local students. A local student is a native born American student or a student

who has been mainstreamed in the American educational system before starting classes at an American institution of higher education.

Majority minority. By the year 2050, the majority minority in higher education will be non-White students comprising the majority of the student population.

Phenomenology. A phenomenological approach is the description of an individual's immediate experience to explore the meaning and essence of the specific phenomena (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013).

Qualitative research. A small number of participants are asked exploratory, open-ended questions; and the researcher collects the data, analyzes text, and interprets findings to extract common themes from participants (Creswell, 2012).

Semi-structured, one-to-one interviews. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2012) contend semi-structured, one-to-one interviews are the preferred method of data collection to elicit detailed personal discussion using an IPA approach.

Student life. Athletics, recreation, fitness centers, intramural sports, and clubs and organizations constitute social organizations at the study site.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the academic and social experiences of students of international background enrolled in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at an American college in Southeast Florida. The study utilized a qualitative approach with open-ended interview questions. This study will provide administrators, faculty, and staff useful information for several purposes. Stakeholders will become better informed how to partner with international students to promote student success, strengthen connections, and build student self-confidence.

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the following: the statement of the problem, background and justification, deficiencies in the evidence, audience, definition of terms, purpose of study, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature grounded in the cultural dimensions theory as it relates to the international student. The research questions are also provided in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 represents a phenomenological research design, which provides insight into the essence of the international student experience. Chapter 3 includes a description of the methodology and an overview of the study, the participants, and the sampling approaches. The instrument, the data collection procedures, permissions obtained, and analysis process are detailed in Chapter 3. Finally, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, and potential research bias are explored. The findings in Chapter 4 provides a background of participants, analysis of the data, themes, and results of the research conducted. Chapter 5 includes an overview of the study, discussion of outcomes, limitations, delimitations, and implications of the study. Finally, recommendations for future research and a conclusion is provided.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Cross-cultural studies in education investigate the influence of culture on individual learning styles, and how learning differences exist between individuals based on a cultural context. This literature review focuses on research relevant to the international student enrolled in higher education courses. The literature review suggests that cultural differences exist among international students, which influence learning styles, preferences, and student and teacher engagement. It also examines the cultural competency of educators, international student adjustment, and academic performance; in addition, policy and legislative issues will be discussed.

Theoretical Perspective

According to Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010), the school experience reinforces the cultural values that have already been experienced within the family setting. The theory based on the experience of the international student is grounded in the cultural dimensions theory, originally developed by Hofstede (1980) describing individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity-femininity. The original theory was revised to include a fifth dimension called long-term orientation and a sixth dimension called indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

The cultural dimensions theory compares cultures, investigates culturally derived patterns, and provides generalizations among various cultures as a method to gain better understanding of cultural diversity, which minimizes the risks of ignoring the impact of cultural differences in various situations (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Based

on Hofstede's research, Luo (2014) stated "that each individual's thinking and behavior patterns are influenced by their early childhood environment" (p. 6). Luo commented that this research intended to improve international communication and understanding.

Historical Context

The social, political, and economic movements spanning the colonial period until today have impacted higher education in America in terms of accessibility, curriculum, and types of institutions. There is a shift to a universal student access to higher education, including all students of diverse ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, and academic levels (Cohen, 1998; Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007). Furthermore, more than three million students prefer to study abroad (Rienties, Beusaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, & Kommers, 2012; Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010) and the number of international students enrolled in a United States institution of higher education increased by more than 6% in 2012 (Marklein, 2013).

International students in higher education undergo an acculturation process, which is due to migration or international study (Berry, 2005). Russell, Rosenthal, and Thomson (2010) found that 41% of 979 international students in Australia experience a considerable amount of stress, which is often a result of homesickness, cultural shock, adaptation to the host culture, or perceived discrimination. Russell, Rosenthal, and Thomson stated that the international student experience challenges the student's sense of well-being; and named various problems that international students experience, including but not limited to homesickness, a lack of support, loneliness, lack of meaningful relationships with host nationals, language difficulties, and unfamiliar academic approaches.

Adaptation. Russell, Rosenthal, and Thomson (2010) modified a questionnaire to investigate three domains of international student well-being: relating to others while living in Melbourne, living and studying in Melbourne, and health and health-related behavior. A response rate of 43.9% of international students studying at a large metropolitan university in Melbourne, Australia was obtained; it was concluded that there were three styles of adaptation. Almost 60% of students were classified as having positive adaptation (i.e., group one), which conflicts with the view that international students are a high-risk group. The unconnected and stressed pattern of group two and the distressed and risk-taking pattern of group three demonstrated less positive ways of adapting to their experience. Both groups displayed high levels of depression, anxiety, and stress when compared with the students demonstrating positive adaption, although neither group displayed pathological levels.

Culture shock. Research has found that sociocultural adjustment for international students is easier when there is less cultural distance, the ensuing result is international students with similar values will experience less stress when studying in a foreign country than students with different values (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, and Todman (2008) defined culture shock as “the stimulus for acquisition of culture-specific skills that are required to engage in new social interactions” (p. 65). Although Berry (2005) claimed culture shock has negative connotations and is not based in cultural or psychological theory; the term stress, as a coping adaption, has a theoretical matrix. Additionally, he admonished that culture signifies only one group involved; whereas, acculturation implies the intercultural exchange between two groups. Therefore, he coined this as acculturative stress rather

than culture shock (Berry, 2005).

Acculturation. Acculturation is influenced by several factors, such as cross-cultural training, cultural identity, and cultural distance. Additional factors include time in a host country, language competence, social interaction, and engagement with people from the host culture. Acculturation is a process involving both psychological and cultural change between two cultural groups, the changes occur in both groups but usually the dominant group changes less than the other (Berry, 2005). In some situations, acculturation can be a mutual adaptation process where both groups share food preferences, learn languages, and adopt social interactions unique to each group. This culture learning process is more typical in pluralistic communities that are less likely to enforce assimilation. Berry (2005) categorized the adaption process to include assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Assimilation is when individuals “shed their heritage culture, and become absorbed into the dominant society” (Berry, 2005, p. 705), and integration is when an individual adopts some behaviors and traits of the receiving country while retaining one's cultural heritage. Separation is the retention of the heritage culture and rejection of the host culture's practices. Finally, marginalization is forced cultural loss, and a lack of interest in having relations with others, often due to discrimination (Berry, 2005).

Berry (2008) stressed that acculturation is not assimilation but rather a mutual process between both cultural groups. While acculturation has been studied in anthropology and psychology for decades, globalization is a recent process that involves intercultural contact and leads to cultural and individual change (Berry, 2008). Berry conjectured that globalization is the starting point for acculturation, and one possible

outcome of globalization is a homogenization of world cultures. But after examining several studies, Berry clarified that the intercultural process of acculturation and globalization may be similar, the outcome are very different.

Globalization. With the current trend of globalization, Dolby and Rahman (2008) recognized the need to identify, describe, and analyze six distinct research approaches to international education in an attempt to explain the historical context and the recent political, social, and cultural changes and its effects on education. Dolby and Rahman used a meta-analysis of six research approaches to international education: (a) comparative and international education, (b) internationalization of higher education, (c) international schools, (d) international research on teaching and teacher education, (e) internationalization of K-12 education, and (f) globalization of education. The survey was not restricted by source, location, type of study, or population, and within each approach: (a) the historical context; (b) global political, economic, social, and cultural shifts; and (c) strengths and weaknesses, were mapped from the major research paths. Dolby and Rahman proposed a need for a revised integrative theoretical framework that will merge the globalization and education approach within the field of international education that embody the political, social, and cultural global shifts. The trend of student globalization has increased enrollment of international students at community colleges (Anayah, 2012) creating greater cultural differences warranting more investigation of international student learning styles, learning preferences, and student and instructor interaction and expectation in the classroom.

Integration. Although the integration process may seem a better process than either assimilation, separation, or marginalization, van Doorn, Scheepers, and Dagevos

(2013) reported that previous studies among the four largest immigrant groups in the Netherlands indicated higher-educated immigrants, who are more apt to integrate, actually experience more group discrimination than lower-educated immigrants; this is referred to as the integration paradox. They found the integration paradox existed for smaller immigrant groups in the Netherlands; namely Afghani, Iraqi, Irani, Somali, Polish and Chinese, and higher-educated immigrants perceive more personal discrimination. Van Doorn et al. stated possible reasons may be higher exposure to Dutch politics, experience of relative deprivation regarding work and education, and greater participation in associations. Data was used from a large-scale survey and 1,000 face-to-face interviews for each of the small ethnic minority groups to explain the educational effect on perceived personal discrimination using hypotheses from a theory of exposure stating higher-educated ethnic minorities, who are better integrated in the host society, are more exposed to instances of racial discrimination than their lower-educated counterparts.

Contextualization of the Setting

The site of the proposed study is at a college located in a majority-minority county, where the non-Hispanic White population accounted for less than 50% of the total population, and includes a large number of individuals who immigrated from Haiti, Jamaica, and other parts of the Caribbean, as well as Central and South America. More than 25% of residents are now foreign-born, of which 70% are from Latin America. Hispanics, primarily of Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Colombian descent, currently represent 17% of the county's total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The study's site is a multicultural and diverse college, which has over 70,000 students in many programs

(e.g., language programs, certificates, associates, bachelors). Students represent more than 150 countries and 45 languages. The college maintains a mission statement of diversity, has a vision of competing globally, and has implemented branch campuses in other countries to diversify college campuses and compete globally, with affiliations with Vietnam, Jamaica, Peru, Finland, Guatemala, Colombia, the United Arab Emirates, and India (Broward College, 2014a).

The site of the study offers a competitive cost of education. For international students from outside the United States, the associate degree costs approximately \$22,500, and a bachelor's degree about \$27,500. The yearly cost of full-time attendance for an in-state student is approximately \$10,990, versus out-of-state cost totaling \$17,163 (Broward College, 2014a). The college offers over 200 online courses; and recently, tuition for its online courses dropped for non-Florida residents by 56%, which affects non-resident students in and outside of the state, as well as international students. The college supports online initiatives and trains workers from other cultures for local businesses looking to create a global workforce (Broward College, 2014b).

For the local student residing in the United States, the application process includes submission of complete transcripts from high schools and colleges, and must have either a General Educational Development (GED), be a home education graduate, or have a standard high school diploma. These criteria are for both local and students of international background. Once the applicant submits an application, transcripts, and shows proof of residency by a driver's license or state identification, a student can apply for federal student aid. A student must take either an American College Testing (ACT), Recentered Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Computerized Placements Tests (CPT),

Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT), or 10th grade Florida Competency Assessment Test (FCAT).

For international students not applying to the language program, an international student application including a signature of a sponsor must be included, along with the equivalence of a United States diploma, official transcribed transcripts of previous course studies, and a minimum score of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Levels of English Proficiency (LOEP), which is an option for students residing in the United States, or successful completion of English IV at an accredited United States high school or university. Additionally, international students who have taken the TOEFL or IELTS must also take the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) for placement into classes (see Appendix A).

The scores on the exams determine student placement into mainstream college classes or into the EAP program consisting of four levels of reading, grammar, and speech classes. After completing level four of the language program, students must retake the PERT, and based on the test results, students will either continue into college level English or complete two additional EAP courses in advanced composition, which may be used as elective credits towards a degree. Previously, the degree-seeking students who did not place into college-level English on the initial PERT test were required to enroll in the EAP or developmental English courses before starting a degree program. But in an effort to increase student retention within the program and the college, fast-track EAP courses over a five or eight-week course is offered, as opposed to the traditional 16-week course. Also, there are Learning Communities (LCs) within the EAP

department, which provide EAP students the opportunity to link an EAP course with a college course that counts toward degree completion. Faculty from various departments link (find connected themes) or pair (create thematic units between both classes) courses within the disciplines. In the LCs, students are part of a cohort that benefit from individualized instruction, themed work without additional workload, support from instructors and peers; this enhances student engagement and increases student success (Tinto, 2003).

The mandatory co-requisite lab class for each speech, reading, grammar, and writing class changed from the completion of thirteen hours of repetitive lab work in a physical lab to an unlimited access to an individualized competency plan where the necessary skills are diagnosed from a pretest. Students must complete online modules and are evaluated on the completion and mastery of skills. The college is working to provide students with less time constraints for English language learners in the EAP program via fast-track courses, reduced lab hours, and more learning community classes where students can work simultaneously on credited classes counting toward degree completion.

The college maintains a cross-cultural learning exchange amongst local and international students. However, even though the college is diverse and represents a global community, students enrolled in intensive English for Academic Purpose (EAP) programs often feel culturally and linguistically isolated from the mainstream student body.

Student Learning Styles and Preferences Across Cultures

A learning style is an individual's preferred way of learning. Research has

indicated that learning styles vary among cultures. Marambe, Vermunt, and Boshuizen (2012) compared and contrasted the learning patterns of higher education students in Asia and Europe, and compared the students' learning patterns between two different Asian countries. This meta-analysis triangulated results of previous studies that investigated the use of learning strategies, conceptions, and learning orientations of first-year university students and used adapted versions of the 120 item Inventory of Learning Styles (ILS), an instrument used to evaluate learning styles of students of diverse cultures. This qualitative comparison found that Sri Lankan, Dutch, and Indonesian students differed from each other in the use of learning strategies, conceptions of learning, and learning outcomes. There were more differences in learning patterns between Sri Lankan and Dutch students than between Sri Lankan and Indonesian students, but on almost half of the scales, there were differences between the Sri Lankan and Indonesian students. Research also examined four factors that all three countries shared: meaning-directed learning pattern, the reproduction-directed learning pattern, external regulation, and the undirected learning pattern (Marambe, Vermunt, & Boshuizen, 2012).

Zhou and Fischer (2013) postulated that people living within a multicultural environment respond to cultural cues and are able to switch between different cultures, which is compared to linguistic code switching. The merging and creation of a new value and belief systems represent ethical behaviors from various cultures. Culture changes people by changing their brains (Harris, 2013). Cultural and educational styles affect brain development, resulting in differences in the cortex; for example, Western cultures independently reason and problem-solve, whereas Eastern cultures memorize and learn collectively (Zhou & Fischer, 2013). The varied learning patterns among students from

different cultural backgrounds necessitates a deeper analysis of instructional design and cultural issues in education.

When an instructor's teaching style matches a student's learning style, the student may have a more positive attitude and increased satisfaction in the overall learning experience (Gregorc, 2012). Educators need to have greater personal introspection as well as an understanding of individual student learning styles. This should impact their teaching methodology in order to optimize student success (Spiro, 2011). Gregorc (2014) contended that teaching styles are behaviors that reflect mental qualities to present data, which will impact student learning in various ways. Gregorc (2014) developed an instrument to assess learning styles: concrete sequential (CS), concrete random (CR), abstract sequential (AS), and abstract random (AR) (Cohen, 2014). Teaching techniques need to vary for the four learning styles. According to Gregorc and Butler (1984), CS teachers tend to be practical and provide concrete examples. AS teachers are researchers who utilize extensive facts and intellectual processing. AR teachers utilize group discussions and value clarification. CR teachers utilize creative brainstorming. Concurrently, AR students are spontaneous, imaginative, perceptive, and idealistic learners. CS students tend to be realistic, organized, diligent, and dependable students who prefer conventional instruction. AS learners are thorough researchers, logical and intellectual; these learners prefer to work independently. CR students are experimenters; creative, adventurous, and naturally curious about the world around them. They are quick and innovative thinkers who work collaboratively but may also need to be given deadlines.

Spiro (2011) determined that diversity of learning styles and cultural differences

should be valued as it reshapes people's identities. Curriculum should allow learners to explore differing approaches and values, and at the same time reflect upon personal identity. Furthermore, Morrison et al. (2013) believed characteristics of culturally diverse students need particular care during planning.

Kinuthia (2009) maintained socio-cultural elements should be interwoven into the instructional design and technology enhanced classrooms to create more multicultural sensitive materials and classrooms. A case study of three male and seven female graduate students was utilized to provide a deeper understanding of learning differences and how culture influences instruction at several levels (i.e., institutional, instructional content, instructors, and learners). The study examined the course development process, the course facilitation process, and overall student experiences in the online course designed for students interested in the field of instructional design and technology. Half of the students expressed intent in working either in K-12 or higher education, and the other 50% in the business industry. Kinuthia collected and analyzed data from several threaded discussions, reflection papers, research papers, and course projects. The course was not meant to consolidate existing stereotypes, but instead to understand how cultural differences affect learning differences. With the onset of online learning and increased globalization, cultural issues should be considered in the design stage.

Wichadee (2013) conducted a study using a hybrid teaching course incorporating team-teaching, three weeks of WebEx Video Conference, two weeks of Learning Management System, and seven tutorial classes. Wichadee confirmed hybrid teaching can improve learning regardless of individual learning styles; hybrid teaching can be an effective method of language development. There are four student learning styles (e.g.,

activist, pragmatist, theorist, reflector), which did not differ in their language improvement but differed in satisfaction. Students with the reflector learning style achieved a higher satisfaction with the course than the other three learning styles. There was also a change in the participants' English language proficiency.

Charlesworth (2008) researched learning styles across cultures, which was part of a larger study to discriminate the relationship between culture and learning style. A questionnaire was given to first and sixth semester Indonesian, Chinese, and French students over a 3-year period to compare learning style preferences. These students were studying in an International Institute of Higher Education seeking a bachelor's degree in hospitality management. The questions made a comparison of learning style preferences of first-year students from various cultural backgrounds. An item-by-item analysis of their responses supported a relationship between learning styles preferences and cultural background, and a second analysis investigated these differences. The researchers posited suggestions for educators based on this culture-learning style connection; however, the generalizability of the research findings was limited, and future research could draw upon a larger scale.

Over a 6-month period, Eaves (2009) examined the learning styles and perceptions of postgraduate Thai students who studied in England compared to Thai students who studied in Thailand. This mixed methods study utilized focus groups, individual interviews, and open-ended questions. The five focus group interviews consisted of 28 Thai students from three English universities, and compared learning patterns and strategies in England and Thailand. Seven months later, Thai students in the same courses and universities were given open-ended questions to reflect on their

perceptions of studying in England. Some common themes that developed from the interviews were difficulties in studying in England due to unfamiliar teaching and learning styles, learning in a second language, and a looser structure of the information than accustomed to (Eaves, 2009). The Inventory of Learning Styles (ILS) was used to assess the learning styles of Thai students in England at two different times, once at the beginning of their postgraduate program and once at the end. For those students with higher levels of English proficiency, the ILS was administered in English, and translated for students studying in a Thai university. Eaves postulated cultural differences exist in learning styles between students in England and Thailand, such as meaning-directed and undirected learning patterns, and the causes and effects of these differences need to be further explored in order to provide a supportive multicultural environment that utilizes effective learning strategies within a new sociocultural context.

Ramburuth and Tani (2009) compared the perception of learning among students from varied cultural backgrounds at a diverse Australian university. This study was part of a larger and longer study, and the instrument used was a survey questionnaire that asked questions about the student's experience, prior learning experiences, language spoken, and interactions with other students and faculty members. The responses of 2,200 undergraduate students were quantitatively analyzed and found there were significant differences between the experiences and learning perceptions of students born in Australia, Asian countries, and other countries. There were reported differences in prior learning and preparation before attending the university, and differences in self-confidence and the ability to participate in classroom discussions, interacting with peers, and engaging with teaching staff from similar and different language backgrounds

(Ramburuth & Tani, 2009).

In two different studies, Shawer (2010, 2012) reviewed existing data on student cognitive styles, learning strategy uses, cognitive functioning, curriculum diversification, and ethnic culture. Shawer reported that there were not any differences attributed to ethnicity since European, American and Eastern ethnicities use typical strategies. Shawer (2010) examined the relationships between learning strategy use and ethnic culture, and Shawer (2012) investigated the interdisciplinary and intercultural differences in learning strategy in English as a foreign language in college. Compensation strategy differences existed between students in humanities and science programs of study, but no other differences existed in other strategies. Cognitive style affects the student's innate learning process; whereas learning strategies are mental operations that students use to process unfamiliar tasks. National, classroom-level and school-level curriculum development and instructional designs, strategy training and individual differences should be the foundation for effective language processing and teaching pedagogy, rather than cultural stereotypes (Shawer, 2010).

Interaction Between Local and International Students

Many international students are disappointed in their relationships with U.S. students (Gareis, 2012). Gareis (2012) conducted a comparison study of international students' friendship experiences in the United States. Four hundred and fifty-four international students in ten public universities completed a survey where 38% reported no strong friendships with U.S. students, and 27% were not satisfied with the quality of the friends they had made. Gareis found that students from China and East Asia were most likely to be unhappy with relationships. Students from English-speaking countries

and from Northern and Central Europe had the most positive experiences, while students from East Asia had the least positive. Students reported better experiences in the southern United States than in the northeast, and better in non-metropolitan than metropolitan environments.

Andrade (2006) conducted a study in which international students reported not having close friendships with local students due to a lack of comfort with local students and a lack of opportunity to interact with local students. When international students and domestic students learn together, both need to adapt in order to work together effectively (Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010). Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, and Kommers (2012) suggested the need for higher educational institutions to provide study support through a partner system of international and local students. In order to facilitate the transition in academic and social life, this support system provided social activities between international and local students. Spiro (2012) ascertained that major opportunities are missed for students to learn from one another in a context of mutual cultural exchange. Bourn (2011) concurred with Spiro that the trend of globalization and internationalization affects both the local student and the international student.

Volet and Ang (2012) reported a lack of research-based evidence of the interaction between local and international students, and of the success of culturally mixed programs. Volet and Ang investigated both international and local students' views of working together in culturally-mixed groups. Seventeen Australian students and 23 international students formed eleven focus groups. The focus groups were semi-structured and six taped interviews were conducted in an informal setting. The first

discussion analyzed the issue of completing academic tasks in culturally mixed groups. Participants were also asked about their experience and perceptions about the completion of assignments in culturally mixed groups, and finally if they experienced a change in perception after the experience. Volet and Ang reported Australian and international students appeared to prefer working on assignments with people of similar backgrounds, and identified four reasons: cultural-emotional connectedness, language, pragmatism, and negative stereotypes. Also, international students felt cultural-emotional connectedness to be very important. Both local and international students realized that their initial bias toward the other group was not accurate, especially regarding work-related attitudes, but this experience would not create a new commitment to join culturally-mixed groups in the future, even if this experience was a positive one. Volet and Ang concluded that interaction between Australians and Southeast Asian students was limited, and became more negative with more time spent in the university. Volet and Ang opined that if Australia is committed to a global education, then changes need to be made to promote intercultural empathy, understanding and acceptance, and postulated that culturally mixed groups could be a positive experience if given monitored class time for structured collaborative tasks.

Tierney (1992) claimed “cultural integrity,” the affirmation of students’ cultural identities, is reinforced by teaching strategies and programs that engage students’ racial and ethnic backgrounds in a positive manner rather than expectations of assimilation. Furthermore, Tierney claimed it is the school’s obligation to facilitate socialization among its students. Leask and Carroll (2011) scrutinized the student experience and demonstrated a need to implement careful course design that would include practical

methods to bridge the gap between local students and students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and create professional development for academic staff.

Leask and Carroll (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of cross-cultural studies and a case study that evaluated the intercultural interaction in the Business Mates program, pairing local and international students together. This study spanned a 2-year time period and utilized a Student Experience Questionnaire before the onset of the mentor program, after one year, and at the culmination of the mentor program. Both formal and informal curriculum is effective in enhancing the local and international students' experience in creating a global perspective. After the first year, students felt they had improved cross-cultural communication skills, and after two years, they would be more prone to work and socialize with people from different cultures (Leask & Carroll, 2011).

Leask and Carroll (2011) proposed there is more need for reflective practice, strategic approaches, activities, and interventions that will contribute to a global classroom. The Business Mates mentoring program trained the mentors in expectations of cross-cultural encounters, the effort required, and the benefits of such efforts. The success of informal cross-cultural paired work of a wide range of short activities suggests a future need for fewer but longer group-work assignments with the same training and support for cross-cultural interaction. The longer assignments could be formally assessed within the formal curriculum, while maintaining training and support for participants. Mickelson and Nkomo (2012) reported heterogeneous friendships are important for academic outcomes, especially for minority students, and reported integrated education fosters the development of culturally flexible individuals that is a requirement for a global economy and citizenship in multiethnic societies.

In another intercultural group study, Turner (2009) explored the challenges of diverse groups and the relationship between curriculum design, teacher perceptions, and the lived experience of students participating in an international program at a U.K. university business school. Turner used journals and qualitatively extracted themes to develop a case study that critically assessed students' perceptions of each other and of the groups in which they participated. Students learned more about intercultural groups both intellectually and experientially, but "positive student integration was an almost complete failure" (p. 252). Additionally, student anxiety was detected when working in intercultural groups, and that teaching content did not allow students to overcome their attitudinal or interactive difficulties (Turner, 2009). Turner reported that students "unhappily coexisted in groups but did not fully inhabit them" (p. 252) and that students became less enthusiastic to work with people who were different over time. Similarly, Wright and Schartner (2013) reported international students expressed reluctance to participate in available interaction opportunities with local students, but at the same time, were frustrated by a limited interaction with English speakers. In a mixed-methods study of 20 international postgraduates enrolled in a 1-year program in England, the effects of language proficiency and student engagement on sociocultural adaptation was investigated. This stressed the importance of creating more support programs for international students, which could improve language proficiency and sociocultural adaptation (Wright & Schartner, 2013).

Anayah (2012) designated the factors that affect the educational, social, and cultural goals of international students in community colleges and examined how international students' needs are being met at community college. Limited resources,

support services, and a reduction in academic offerings make it increasingly difficult for community colleges to meet the educational, social, and cultural goals of the international students on their campuses. This qualitative study examined the experience of international students at selected California community colleges and explored how they perceive their needs are being met in terms of their educational, social, and cultural goals. The study identified factors that influenced international students' experience in community colleges. Three central themes identified during the interview process revealed that international students choose a particular community college to improve language skills, a better education, and because community college admissions is a relatively easy and open process. The educational goals include a transfer to a 4-year university, attaining a suitable career, and maintaining native culture while learning a new culture. Students who had a positive learning experience were satisfied with their academic experience, but were not satisfied with the academic counseling received (Anayah, 2012). Three areas emerged as relevant: criteria that influence students' choice of institution, challenges of students, and institutional responsibility. Anayah recommended further research on the contribution and academic success of international students to community colleges.

Cousin (2012) examined two articles regarding different dimensions of student learning and the contemporary applicability in today's university setting. The 1998 article by Volet and Ang (as cited in Cousin, 2012) discussed why students prefer to gravitate toward other co-nationals rather than mix with students from different backgrounds, and Cousin concluded that national culture is more involved than the classification that Hofstede (1980) created. Cousin examined a second article written by

Biggs in 1999 that used a phenomenological tradition to explore the best way to support learning in the university curriculum and student focused teaching with interactive pedagogies rather than transmissive models. Biggs (as cited in Cousin, 2012) concluded that problem-based learning and the learning portfolio are two ways of achieving a student centered learning. This has inspired many faculty to pay attention to where students are coming from, what activities they will take part in, and creating appropriate assessments. Cousin agreed with Biggs that curriculum design can transform what happens in the classroom. Since universities have formal and informal curriculum, there is an urgency toward more analysis of the formal and informal interaction in university education and an examination of the complex relation of student and teacher experience.

The Cultural Engagement of Student and Teacher

From an educator's standpoint within a multicultural setting, the different values influence students' self-perception and relationship to peers and teachers. In a study of instructors and international students at a U.S. college, Nieto and Booth (2010) investigated the influence of cultural competence on the teaching and learning process for instructors and students of higher education. The mixed-methods study examined whether (a) a difference exists in the level of intercultural sensitivity between university instructors and ESL students and (b) ESL instructors and non-ESL instructors vary in their levels of intercultural sensitivity. Nieto and Booth confirmed the positive relationship between instructors' cultural competence and international students' feelings of welcome and comfort in a foreign country. They also claimed that instructors reported a higher level of intercultural sensitivity than college students and a significant difference in interaction was found between ESL instructors and non-ESL instructors. Instructors,

not students, expressed culture and language were the greatest challenges for international students. Sanderson (2011) conjectured that more research is necessary on instructors' knowledge of internationalized curricula and personal and professional attitudes in higher education. Sanderson stated that over the past two decades, research has focused on activities at the organizational level and the social and academic experiences of international students, but should now focus on the development of international and intercultural perspectives in teaching.

Russell, Rosenthal, and Thomson (2010) reported that a common belief among educators is that international students are insufficiently adjusted to higher education in their host country, both academically and socially. Personal identities and assumptions of students from varied backgrounds and how those assumptions may affect teaching philosophies and methods were explored by Nunez, Ramalho, and Cuero (2010) in a qualitative study that used a critical performance ethnography. First, personal experiences relating each participant's diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds were chronicled in journals, and then participants discussed how their experiences affected their pedagogy regarding students from diverse cultures, particularly Latinos. From the analysis, common themes and relationships between these themes were identified, particularly that diversity exists among students, the importance of personal identity, and how it affects teacher-student relationships. Cultural backgrounds should be seen as a resource rather than a liability. Importance should be placed on action, namely in the classroom and collaboration among faculty members, which helps ease the isolation commonly experienced by those from mixed heritages. Nunez et al. found that peer mentoring aided in personal reflection and a better sense of personal identity, which in

turn facilitated understanding of students from multiple communities and allowed a more positive collaboration where the students' perspective was valued. Faculty will benefit from single or multi-institutional peer mentoring groups on the basis of any relevant shared affiliation (e.g., cultural background issues). This can validate personal identity and in turn aid in educational equity for students of diverse backgrounds. If faculty members encourage students to explore the connections between their personal biographies within a greater context of community, there will be a more positive environment for students and faculty from all backgrounds (Nunez et al., 2010).

Eaves (2009) contended that educators of international students need to be aware of culture-related differences and challenges that are raised by studies in order to be able to provide an appropriately supportive and encouraging multicultural environment.

Leask and Carroll (2011) identified the need to develop new and more effective approaches to professional development, which engage staff in curriculum design that facilitates intercultural engagement. Multicultural activities should not be just for first-year students, and trained teaching staff should prepare students to be able to work in cross-cultural groups with students from different languages or cultural backgrounds. Leask and Carroll conjectured that cross-cultural learning for both staff and students begins with creating classes that encourage meaningful and purposeful interaction and cross-cultural engagement.

Globalization creates new challenges for education and educators in higher education, and studies report a necessity of teacher and student sensitivity programs. Spiro (2011) explored the process of building an international student community through a 2-year survey of 38 teachers who were enrolled in a master's of education

program. The qualitative study was separated into three phases and was interpretive within the framework of a case study. The teachers comprised two groups, and all had a minimum of two years teaching experience. The first group taught in the public sector in their home country to students speaking their mother tongue, and the second group taught in both the public and private sector in Latin America, Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, and did not share the same language or culture. During the first twelve weeks, students participated in group reflection activities through an online portal, and shared experiences of being in their varied cultural settings.

Common patterns were identified about the influences of institutional constraints, learning background, and cultural context. Participants deconstructed their sense of identity in relationship with others and maintained personal logs of their experience for the length of the study to record any influences of this study on their pedagogical practice. The project emphasized the role of constraints of syllabi, class sizes, and institutional audits, as well as identified assumptions about other cultural groups. With the onset of globalized classrooms and an international agenda in curriculum in higher education, Spiro (2011) determined that cultural differences and diversity should be valued as it reshapes people's identities, and that the curriculum should allow learners to explore differing approaches and values, and at the same time reflect upon their own identity. In order for educators to be more effective, they need to have a more thorough understanding of their students and the cultural impacts on their learning styles. This plan should equally involve the local student and the international student. In the study, one local participant believed it to be a missed opportunity when a classmate is unable to interact with someone from another culture.

Trahar and Hyland (2011) explored the perceptions and practices of internationalizing the curriculum from student, academic, and discipline perspectives using 15 focus groups comprised of local students, international students, and academics at five United Kingdom universities over a 4-month period. This qualitative study used a topic guide that included how internationalization affected the curriculum, teaching, and learning. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire and a feedback sheet at the end of each group session. The study also explored staff awareness of pedagogy and the role of different cultural backgrounds. The majority of staff was sensitive to different academic traditions and cultural backgrounds of their students but did not have a theoretical and philosophical understanding of culture in learning and teaching practices. Cousin (2012) believed teachers hold beliefs about the ability and practices of groups of students, and a need exists to research how this impacts student learning.

Cultural Competency of Educators

Núñez (2009) associated diversity curricula with increased positive cross-racial interactions and a sense of belonging among Latino students in the university; and faculty who promote diversity serve as role models and mentors for students of diverse backgrounds. McAllister and Irvine (2000) reported inconsistent findings thwart development of effective strategies to change teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors resulting in success for culturally diverse students, and that existing teacher training and professional development models do not develop the type of cross-cultural competence needed to teach diverse students. McAllister and Irvine focused on three process-oriented models, which includes the racial identity development, typology of ethnicity, and developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. The stages begin where people

move from a self-centered stage, to identification with society, and finally to a global context which allows an ability to relate to others. Faculty need to learn about their students' cultures, and incorporate models to improve cross-cultural knowledge and skills to become more effective with their diverse learners. The researchers believed support groups, opportunities for student interaction among mixed cultural groups, and on-going professional development to increase the skills of the faculty may decrease the possible conflict between students and their teachers (McAllister & Irvine, 2000).

Lombardi (2010) completed an overview of instruments used in assessing intercultural sensitivity or competence of students, faculty, or staff. She named five common instruments used in higher education: (a) the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), (b) the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI), (c) Cross-Cultural World-Mindedness Scale (CCWMS), (d) Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ISI), and (e) the Assessment of Intercultural Competence (AIC). Intercultural assessment tools will help educators to understand and measure outcomes and interventions. Swartz (2009) conjectured teachers need to strengthen connections with students and their identities. Educators need to rethink standard approaches when students fail to benefit from them. The notion of studying the history and cultures of the students, both individually and culturally, results in more classrooms with equal learning opportunities and outcomes for the students.

Barker and Mak (2013) analyzed the results of an intercultural resource of six generic social competencies (i.e., asking for help, making social contact, group participation, refusing a request, disagreement, feedback) in diverse business and health courses to gauge intercultural competency development in curriculum used by academics

and professionals in intercultural scenarios in classroom and practice settings. The EXCELL program is taught in five stages to develop practical skills in intercultural communication. The researchers reviewed four case studies examining the usefulness and limitations of this program to (a) gauge students' skills in cross-cultural interaction problems in business situations, (b) improve students' skills using appropriate strategies to overcome problems in cross-cultural business interactions, and (c) increase students' self-confidence in cross-cultural situations. Barker and Mak found the EXCELL program helped students improve social interactions skills in a new cultural context; and that cross-cultural capability is related to intercultural competence, allowing one to relate to others professionally and socially in a multicultural environment. Barker and Mak discussed the results of a 2-year Australian project, which aided faculty to incorporate intercultural competency development in curriculum design to help prepare students for their workplace internships. They claimed professional development opportunities are needed to promote intercultural contact, and educators need to incorporate intercultural learning activities to involve both home and international students. A global perspective is a trend in higher education, but according to Barker and Mak, the transformational nature of this learning is less readily incorporated into professional development and curriculum redesign. Academics and practitioners need to continue to explore and share their practices.

International Student Adjustment

Academic adjustment problems for international students stem from language issues (Andrade, 2006; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Zhang & Mi, 2010). Andrade (2006) claimed that adjustment challenges are related to English language proficiency and

culture and reported achievement is affected by English proficiency, academic skills and educational background. Andrade examined international students enrolled in Australian universities who were on temporary student visas and were non-native English speakers. This comparison of domestic and international student adjustment analyzed professors' and students' views of adjustment challenges, explored student experiences, and examined the support services. Factors were identified that influence the adjustment and academic achievement of international students. Both local and international students reported benefiting from tutors, and positive learning incidents helped international students participate more and work harder, but international students displayed more anxiety. International students contributed language weakness as the main reason for not participating in class whereas professors believed culture played the dominant role in students' lack of participation. Andrade reported international students experienced more difficulty adjusting socially, but the social adjustment improved with greater interaction between local and international students. A component of intercultural education should include an understanding of international student adjustment.

Professors from Australia believe students prefer the learning systems of their home country, but it has been documented 80% of the students preferred direct experience regarding interaction with topics and situations, even if the lecture mode was most common (Ladd & Ruby, 1999). Ladd and Ruby (1999) reported that students prefer working alone rather than in groups. Andrade (2006) claimed faculty and support staff need to shed faulty beliefs of international students, and find ways to accommodate students. Andrade contended international student's lack of language proficiency, cultural knowledge, friendships with local and students of the same culture, and peer

support programs affect adjustment and academic achievement.

Tierney (1992) defined “cultural integrity” as the affirmation of students’ cultural identities, and is reinforced by teaching strategies and programs that engage students’ racial and ethnic backgrounds in a positive manner rather than shedding their cultural identities. Furthermore, Tierney claimed it is the school’s obligation to facilitate socialization among its students. Museus and Quaye (2009) stressed the importance of establishing connections with faculty and peers on campuses through academic programs and peer groups that provide students with interaction opportunities.

Academic Performance

Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, and Kommers (2012) postulated institutions of higher education need to enhance academic adjustment of international students. In this 2012 study, Rientes et al. found that academic performance of students is determined by the level of academic adjustment, not by ethnicity. They conducted a cross-institutional comparison of first year students, 670 international students, and 288 Dutch students at five business schools in the Netherlands. This study assessed whether international students’ academic and social integration differs from domestic students, and whether these differences have an influence on academic performance.

Students’ academic integration was measured with the Students’ Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) (Rientes et al., 2012). International students with a mixed western ethnic background performed well on both academic and social integration in comparison to domestic students. In contrast, international students with a non-Western background were less integrated compared to other international students. In general, Western students scored better than Dutch students on academic integration

and study-performance. Western students studying abroad were generally older than their domestic peer students, and their reason to study abroad was more of a conscious choice, resulting in higher motivation. The researchers found that non-Western students have lower scores on academic and social integration in comparison to other students, with the exception of academic adjustment. In particular, non-Western students have more adjustment issues, which Rientes et al. claimed is due to less emotional or financial support from family and friends, leading to lower personal and emotional well-being. But it was found that after one year, these students perform as well as the local students due to the high academic adjustment. Additionally, social life was named as being a strong influence on academic integration.

Rientes et al. (2012) documented that academic performance is affected positively by academic integration; and that most participating business schools provided learning experiences to international students, such as introduction programs for international students with academic support structures like coaching, buddies, and competency-based education. Also, they found that the increase of academic and social integration could be related to the distance in East-West social conventions among international students (Rientes et al., 2012). Jiang, Emmerton, and McKaige (2013) explored the effects of cultural background and separated students according to “domestic versus international, Western versus Oriental, and native English speakers versus non-English-speaking background” (p. 175), claiming students’ English language proficiency correlates with the ability to correctly paraphrase work without plagiarizing. Furthermore, Marsh (2011) claimed different motives for plagiarizing and cheating may be more acceptable in different contexts. In order for educators to be more effective, they need to have a more

thorough understanding of their students and the cultural impacts on their learning styles (Spiro, 2011).

Cultural differences can be misinterpreted with negative consequences for international students (Cohen, 2007). Cohen (2007) found the concepts of cheating and students' shared work acceptable in many cultures; in fact, this is considered honorable to helping others in this capacity. The sharing of information is not seen as an issue of honesty, character, and integrity. Students do not believe cheating to be unethical, and in some cultures, it is considered a game, a challenge and/or acceptable behavior if caught. In many cases, students felt insulted by accusations of wrongdoing, and students felt it would be considered a lack of character not to help classmates. Cohen described a situation involving a student from Asia who enjoyed the challenge of cheating but readily admitted to wrongdoing if caught.

Museus and Quay (2009) reported campus cultural organizations validated student diversity, which decrease cultural tensions for study participants. Nuñez (2009) assessed Latino students' sense of belonging in college and whether the Latino students perceived a hostile racial or ethnic climate. The 2009 study examined the social and intercultural ability to negotiate diverse racial and ethnic environments and found that Latino students who are more familiar with diversity issues reported more social and academic connections and engagement experience, which contributed to a greater sense of belonging. University policy needs to encourage intercultural sharing where students have diversity experiences through positive intercultural interactions and diversity curricula. Additionally, Nuñez reported the amount of student's interactions with faculty and positive cross-racial interactions with other students is positively associated with a

sense of belonging, academic adjustment, academic performance, and retention.

Intercultural interactions increase learning and satisfaction in college.

Technology Instructional Materials Aid Language Learning

The technology revolution has helped transform the way students submit and conduct work (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2011). It supplements instruction as it made access to information more universal. Technology has increased student access to higher education through online learning and has further connected a diverse student body, forming a global classroom. In this postmodern time, college culture is transformed by the interactions of a diverse student body (Thelin, 2009).

Technological changes have revolutionized education, and there is an increase in enrollment of students and classes geared to the continuing education student. Digitized learning opportunities enhances traditional teaching methods (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2011). Instructors can expose students to more information and course content. There is a close connection between languages and globalization, and the Internet and online websites aid in teaching and learning as elements of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) (Kartal & Uzun, 2010).

Technology helps motivate English language learners to develop strategies for successful learning of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Movies, music, and different materials can help students (Genc-Ilter, 2009; Usun, 2007). Tsai and Jenks (2009) reported there are benefits of learning vocabulary by Computer Assisted Language Learning. Initially, radio, television, cassettes, CD-ROMs, DVDs contained low interactivity for students (Cunningham, 1998), but with the advancements of communicative and interactive tools such as e-mails, chat rooms, discussion boards, and Internet

conferences, technological material became more interactive.

The use of technology online and via distance education provide an opportunity to develop and create different, enjoyable tasks in English language classrooms (Genc-Iltar, 2009). Many instructors see the efficacy of computer software in English language learning, and currently, the focus is on methodology and use of interactive software (Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2003). Tsai and Jenks conducted a study to explore the effect of using a CD-ROM program as a supplement in teaching English language students. The participants were divided into an experimental group and a control group for four weeks. The participants in the experimental group used a Teacher Guided Multimedia CD-ROM program while the control group received traditional instruction; the results showed the experiment group achieved better English vocabulary acquisition compared to the control group.

Wang (2004) contended technology helps increase language communication and develops specific language skills. Listening skills improve with the use of audio visual technology; learners can combine auditory skills and visual cues to heighten comprehension. Furthermore, videos present information using multimedia methods, which respond to the diverse learning styles present in a typical classroom. Sarica and Cavus (2008) found e-learning using chat rooms, net meetings, and pen pals among English language learners enhanced student learning.

Technology and Competency-Based Content

In the trend of competency based curriculum, technology instructional material caters to the individual, rather than lecture to the masses. Peppers and Rogers (1999) claimed technology makes it possible to market to the individual. Morrison, Ross,

Kalman, and Kemp (2013) contended that technology-based instruction provides benefits over traditional teacher-led instruction; distance education can reach a greater number of people and can save time and money. Distance learning, massive open online courses (MOOCs), and online blended courses are competency-based classes; students have unlimited access to an individualized plan where the necessary skills are diagnosed from a pretest. Students must complete online modules and are evaluated on the completion and mastery of skills. The surge of massive open online courses through Coursera, edX, and Udacity uses non-traditional learning models and has the potential of expanding student access to colleges by improving accessibility to online courses.

Current technological trends in higher education involve online learning, which is transforming the face of higher education. Dias and Diniz (2014) claimed that technological systems can be effective in blended learning, which combine face-to-face and online learning, but should include mediating tools that support interaction, collaboration, communication and sharing of information. Morrison et al. (2013) delineated five types of computer-based instruction; (a) drill-and-practice, (b) tutorials, (c) simulations, (d) games, and (e) hypermedia. Drill-and-practice, tutorials, and simulation are useful for the presentation and provide real world application. New technologies such as mobile phones, tablets, and ipads can be used in classes using hypermedia (Ross & Exposito, 2014).

M-learning, the use of mobile computing devices for learning within a wireless network environment, can increase learning motivation when used with appropriate instructional strategies (Huang, Liao, Huang, & Chen, 2014). Huang et al. (2014) found that tablets have become the most promising devices for m-learning and are replacing

other devices like phones due to the multimedia audiovisual capabilities and ability to save and browse information. Computer-based design provides learner control via navigation of the material, ability to choose the context of the lesson, and control over the amount of content to study (Morrison et al., 2013). Additionally, it provides immediate feedback using five different types of feedback: (a) knowledge-of-result, (b) knowledge-of-correct-response, (c) answer-until-correct, (d) elaborated feedback, and (e) response-sensitive feedback.

With new technologies, learning content becomes rich and diverse owing to the use of hypermedia and multimedia instruction through the use of pictures and words (Yang, Hwang, & Yang, 2013). Drill and practice programs can provide immediate feedback where students have access to online reading and writing labs, instead of rote lab exercises where students must complete hours minimum of repetitive lab work in a physical lab, students could have unlimited access to an individualized plan where the necessary skills are diagnosed from a pretest. Instructional technology gives support and assistance when problems arise, which are important with the implementation of such new programs.

Disadvantages of Using Technology

Technology can provide efficient instruction; however, it may not be more effective (Morrison et al., 2013). Digital serious games (SGs) aid learning in educational and training settings. Connolly, Stansfield, and Hainey (2011) found its potential is not being met in obtaining higher-order learning goals of transferable skills. Connolly et al. contended there is a need for more educational technology research as technology design is used in education, and is part of the teaching and learning process. Kartal and Uzun (2010)

conducted a study of fourteen university students taking a CALL language class via the Internet, and it was found that the lack of physical, contextual, and pedagogical skills affected acquisition of language skills. Additionally, they investigated 28 foreign language teaching websites, and built a model foreign language website frame. After a review of the application and problems on teacher-training programs for computer education and computer-assisted education, Usun (2007) found problems using instructional technology-programs and computer-assisted education in developing countries.

Cairncross (2001) contended through the Internet, there is no great distance as people are connected globally. Efficient language translating programs are an example of our interconnectedness where language is no longer an impediment amongst people of different regions. Genc-Ilter (2009) suggested instructors use authentic and interactive activities focused on the needs and interests of students. Faculty need to realign andragogy to a constructivist learning model rather than the traditional lecture transmissive model of learning in order to effectively meet the trend of competency goals.

Legislative Initiatives

Changes from state and federal legislature have impacted institutions of higher education and created social and political challenges within colleges (i.e., student demographics, academic curriculum, student retention, student success) (Altbach, Gumport & Berdahl, 2011). The societal impact of globalization and internationalization has increased student diversity. Diversity represents one of the largest societal changes (Altbach et al., 2011); as student demographics change, so do student needs.

College enrollment consists of 11.6 million students, and 34% are minorities with Latin students being the fastest growing minority population (Lumina Foundation, 2008).

Altbach, Gumport, and Berdahl (2011) predicted by 2050, it will be a majority-minority population. Ethnic minorities and first-generation learners make up much of this increase in enrollment (Mellow & Heelan, 2008), and higher education needs to respond to the changing demographic needs (Philadelphia, 2008). Student access will increase with legislative initiatives like the Development, Relief, and Educational for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) that would grant deferred action status to temporarily allow children of undocumented immigrants to have identification, work, and go to school.

History of Policy

The landmark United States Supreme Court decision, *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) opposed state denial of funding for undocumented immigrant children and is applied to elementary and secondary education, yet there remains divided solutions for postsecondary schools. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) has since permitted some states to refuse illegal students admission or eligibility for in-state tuition. The DREAM Act of 2009 was an attempt to modify the IIRIRA so that within the realm of higher education, states could determine student residency and allow illegal immigrant students who came to the United States as children to enroll in postsecondary institutions (O'Connor & Mack, 2012). Although this may improve student access, it is still limiting since many public colleges and universities categorize undocumented students as international students, consequently charging higher fees to an already economically disadvantaged population. As a result, only a small amount of such students attend institutions of higher education (Gray, Rolph, & Melamid, 1996).

Goals of the Policy

While Congress has made no further progress in immigration reform, states have attempted to interpret, modify, and amend existing policy regarding children of undocumented parents, and apply it in the context of college accessibility (i.e., enrollment) and affordability (i.e., in-state tuition rates, financial-aid programs). Based upon the National Congress of State Legislatures website, seventeen states permitted enrollment and eligibility for in-state tuition of undocumented students:

California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin, but Oklahoma and Wisconsin no longer offer in-state tuition for these students. However, state law permits the Oklahoma State Regents to enroll a student as long as they meet certain requirements. The state laws provided in-state tuition if they meet the following stringent criteria: (a) graduation from state high school, (b) two to three years of state residency, and (c) application to state college or university. Furthermore, the student may need to show promise to obtain legal immigration status. In 2012, Maryland revised its law to state that undocumented students may receive aid after completing 60 credits from a community college in Maryland.

In 2011, Rhode Island Board of Governors implemented a policy to provide in-state tuition to undocumented students, followed by the Hawaii Board of Regents and Michigan Board of Regents in 2013. In addition, state financial aid is given to undocumented students in California, New Mexico, and Texas. In 2014, the federal legislature passed plans to increase state need grants for these students. This issue has been debated since 2001; legislation has been introduced to modify the IIRIRA of 1996

to cover in-state tuition and offer a quick route to citizenship for undocumented students. There has been great debate over the meaning of the IIRIRA of 1996, which claims states cannot give benefits to an undocumented person based on residency unless any American citizen receives the same benefit. This has since permitted some states to refuse illegal students school admission or eligibility for in-state tuition.

The intention of the Dream Act of 2011 would give states the right to utilize residency to receive benefits as well as give provisional legal status meeting the following criteria: (a) the student was younger than fifteen years of age upon arrival, (b) has lived in the United States for five years, (c) has a United States high school diploma or GED, (d) is of “good moral character” and has not been convicted of any crimes, and (e) was younger than 32 at the time of the law. Additionally, undocumented students must undergo background checks, medical exams, and register for military service. After two years of military service or attendance at college, students can receive permanent residency. Of the immigration receiver states, Florida and Arizona are the only states that have not passed a state version of the DREAM Act (O’Connor & Mack, 2012), although the Immigration and Customs Enforcement has influenced Florida immigration agents to grant deferred action status, as opposed to deportation. Arizona, Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, South Carolina, and Indiana have laws prohibiting unauthorized students from receiving in-state tuition.

Policy Implications

Fifteen states offer enrollment for undocumented students who have graduated from a high school in the United States. Most of these states do not offer federal aid until they become a legal immigrant. As Baum and Flores (2011) contended, postsecondary

attainment rates of low-income families are low, and even lower for those students with illegal status and no college experience. Since 2011, variations of the DREAM Act have been debated, and in June 2012, a federal policy called the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was issued by the Secretary of Homeland Security that permits unauthorized immigrants who are “low enforcement priorities” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014) to temporarily stay in the United States. Policy reforms have allowed nearly 600,000 illegal immigrants approved legal status DACA and allows renewal of such status every two years (Dinan, 2014).

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services reviews individual cases and gives deferred action status for two years. With the deferred action status, an immigrant can also obtain a drivers’ license and work legally. Many states have responded by implementing policies regarding procurement of drivers’ licenses, college admissions, and even financial aid assistance. The federal administration encourages local state immigration agents to grant deferred action status to students who are detained or face deportation. This deferred action status temporarily allows offspring of undocumented immigrants to have identification, ability to work, and go to school. Although Immigration and Customs Enforcement has guidelines for local immigration agents, it is still discretionary until the bill is passed.

How State Legislative Action Impacts EAP Programs

The DREAM Act could further increase student access and make higher education a viable option while simultaneously providing another route for American citizenship. With the proposed federal DREAM Act, there would be another method for foreign-born people living in the United States to have access to higher education. The

DREAM Act will change the criteria for documents permitting undocumented students and students born in the United States to undocumented parents to pay in-state tuition to attend colleges. Once the applicant submits an application, transcripts, and shows proof of residency by a driver's license or state identification, a student can apply for federal student aid. A student must take either an American College Testing (ACT), Recentered Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Computerized Placements Tests (CPT), Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT), or 10th grade Florida Competency Assessment Test (FCAT).

Institutions of higher education have experienced change from state and federal legislature, especially in public institutions (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2011). Legislature like the DREAM Act and SB1740 impact academic curriculum, student retention, and student success. Demographics, immigration, diversity, and educational disparities have implications for higher education (Altbach et al., 2011). There is a great diversity of students who enroll at the college who are academically underprepared, and are culturally, socially, and economically challenged. Nearly 80% of students entering need one or all three areas of developmental education in reading, English and math. In 2013, Senate Bill 1720 was passed in an effort to improve student retention and student success. Senate Bill 1720 has restructured remedial instruction as developmental education, changed the general education requirement from 36 to 30 hours, and established course delivery strategies to include modularized, accelerated instruction, co-requisite instruction, and meta-majors.

Previously, students were required to take a placement test upon admittance to the college, and the scores on the placement test determined academic course work. But test

placement criteria was not effective in determining the level of students (Howdysshell, n.d.). With the new guidelines, students are exempt from taking the placement test if they are considered active duty military or if they began school at a Florida public high school in 2003 or later and earned a standard high school diploma. These students have the option to take the test and are not required to take remediation classes.

Homeschooled students, graduates from private and out-of-state or out-of-country high schools, GED recipients, and those who do not meet the placement score criteria are still required to enroll in EAP and/or developmental classes.

Conclusion

College students are from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, and the impact of events elsewhere in the world affect how people learn in a specific environment (Bourn, 2011). The increase in student mobility and the internalization of programs in higher education necessitates a need for more effective interactions between all students of different cultures, as well as interaction with their instructors. Stone (2006) stated the need for developing (a) appropriate teaching methods and curricula for staff, (b) support services for international and local students from diverse cultural backgrounds, (c) the facilitation of positive social interaction between staff and students, and (d) opportunities for staff and students to understand global issues and actively engage with one another. Leask (2011) proposed more focus on the creation of engagement possibilities for all students in the learning process, both inside and outside the classroom and postulated the need to develop new and effective approaches to motivate and reward the interaction across cultures for all students.

The literature review substantiates a need for further exploration of the

international student's perspective, so stakeholders can improve initiatives to help international students prepare academically and/or socially for American colleges. Furthermore, there is a need to explore ways to help these students who face barriers to success by empowering and engaging students and creating a new consciousness of events and educational experiences, so researchers, educators, and administrators in institutions of higher education can create positive learning environments for all students in American colleges.

Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand international students' experiences who attend an American college. Additionally, this study seeks to understand the challenges and successes that face them both academically and socially, as well as the factors that motivate or hinder the students to attend an American college.

The following central question will guide this study.

Central research question. What are international student experiences while attending an American college in South Florida?

The following sub-questions will assist the researcher in gaining additional information in order to understand the international students' experiences.

Research Question 1. What is the international students' academic experience at the American college?

Research Question 2. What is the international students' social experience at the American college?

Research Question 3. What motivates or hinders international students to attend an American college?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study explored the academic and social experiences of students of international background enrolled in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at a 4-year public American college in Southeast Florida.

Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research produces findings by describing, explaining, and interpreting patterns to create common themes. The study used an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), an approach that allows participants to share stories, speak freely, and reflectively describe experiences (Moustakas 1994; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012), the relationship between what happened and how the participants have come to understand the events, and finally to examine the commonalities among the international students (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). The study provided a rich description of the experiences of international students placed in an EAP class at a community serving college in Southeast Florida.

Interviews provide an idea of a person's attempts to make sense of his or her experiences, and produce interesting data (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012). Twenty-five students enrolled in an EAP class were invited to participate. The criteria for this purposeful sampling of international students is a high proficiency in English so language will not be a barrier. The first nine highest proficient English speakers to respond to the invitation were selected for the interviews. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of nine students. There were two interviews lasting one hour each, and the researcher conducted memoing, the process of recording reflective notes, during

both interviews. In the first interview, Questions 1 through 5 were asked; in the second interview, Questions 6 and 7.

A phenomenological approach is an appropriate strategy to better understand the unique social and academic experience of each international student at an American college. Much of the previous literature on international students has been based on case studies. The phenomenological approach provided a deeper insight into the essence of the international student experience. The interview protocol utilized seven open-ended questions during a recorded interview, which were part of the data collection procedure. The researcher then collected and analyzed the information to see what themes emerge based on the interviewees' responses.

Participants

The target population includes participants who (a) view this American college as their host institution, (b) English is not their home language, and (c) did not place into college-level English classes. Once students have been accepted into the college, they are required to take a Levels of English Proficiency test. The scores on the test determine student placement into the four levels of reading, grammar, and speech classes (see Appendix D). After completing the final level of the language program, students take the Post-secondary Education Readiness Test (PERT); based on the PERT test results, students may either continue into college level English or complete two additional EAP courses in advanced composition, which may be used as elective credits towards a degree.

The inclusion criteria for the study included EAP students who have been placed into one of the four levels of the English language program at the specific campus. These

students came from a different cultural, linguistic, or ethnic background with limited exposure to the local culture, or who obtained a student visa to study in a foreign country. The exclusion criteria for the students were local students who are native born American students or who have been mainstreamed in the American educational system before starting classes at an American institution of higher education. Also excluded from the sample were students currently not enrolled in the English language program at the proposed site.

The participants of the study were from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds from Central America, South America, and Eastern Europe. There is a global reflection of political and economic situations within the classroom, and the influx of students from different locations vary depending on worldwide events. Student ages ranged from nineteen to 31 years. The setting was in a classroom within a building at a public 4-year college in a midsize city in Southeast Florida.

Sampling approaches. Qualitative research produces findings by describing, explaining, and interpreting patterns to create common themes. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative sampling where researchers “intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). The size of qualitative sampling is smaller than in quantitative research, and is not intended to generalize. The individuals were selected based on their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background, in addition to their familiarity with the researcher. The participants were international students from different countries attending an American college for the first time and enrolled in an EAP program that prepares nonnative English speaking students for college mainstream classes. An invitation letter was sent by email to 25 students

enrolled in the EAP program who shared a high level of English proficiency. Upon successful completion of the EAP classes, students will exit the EAP program and begin mainstream college classes.

Instrument

The researcher utilized a sequence of seven open-ended questions to collect in-depth data from the international students about their lived experiences as a student at an American college. The seven open-ended questions gathered information of the international student's social and academic experience at an American college. The literature of academic and social experiences influenced the protocol questions for the international students (Anayah, 2012; Berry, 2005; Zhou et al., 2008). The questions allowed the participants to critically respond and relate many perspective perspectives of their social and academic experiences. There were no language barriers based upon the purposeful sample of participants who have a high proficiency in English. The central purpose of the interviews was to collect qualitative data to examine the international student's academic and social experience enrolled in English for Academic Purposes classes at a 4-year public American college in Southeast Florida. The interviewer used memoing in addition to recording the interviews, and then analyzed data from transcribed words.

The interview protocol is a piloted instrument that has been reviewed by a panel of experts. This committee is consisted of two faculty members of the American college. The selection of this committee was based on their experiences of teaching, mentoring, and advising international students. One of the committee members was an Assistant Professor and EAP coordinator; the other was interim Associate Dean of the EAP and

English department. This committee reviewed and verified the questions. Once the committee agreed upon the questions, the interview protocol was pilot tested. The committee felt the line of questions elicited students' lived experiences at the college and did not feel any changes were necessary. A group of fifteen students were asked to participate, and five volunteered to participate in the pilot test. The final interview protocol was piloted on five international students. These five participants were asked to provide feedback on the questions and no further change was needed after the pilot test. The international students who participated in the pilot study had similar criteria to the nine selected participants of the study; however, they were not be part of the selected nine participants.

Procedures

Data collection procedures. The researcher designed an interview form. The interview protocol included designing a form that contained instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked, possible probes for each question, and space to take notes on responses from the interviewee (Creswell, 2012). During the interview, the researcher used memoing to record reflective notes. The interviews were digitally recorded. IPA necessitates a verbatim record of data (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012). The first set of questions were based on participants' experiences, then they were transcribed. From the transcription, information was be gleaned. The researcher returned to the second interview and completed a member check. Participants read and made the necessary edits to their related experiences when responding to questions one through five. The researcher clarified the edits for meaning. During the second interview, questions six and seven were based on meaning and suggesting any advice, and relating

personal lessons learned in their experiences. Finally, the transcriptions were color-coded and common themes emerged from the data. Transcendental phenomenological procedures consist of identifying the phenomena, bracketing out one's experience, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Permissions. Since the research involved human subjects, approval was gained from the college study site campus institutional review board (IRB) intended to (a) seek permission from the board, (b) describe the project, (c) submit an informed consent form, and (d) have the project reviewed (Creswell, 2012). During the institutional review board process, the anonymity of participants was ensured by assigning pseudonyms to the individuals and removing descriptors that identified the college. Additionally, IRB permission was obtained from the researcher's university. IRB approval was obtained from both the institution of the intended site and the researcher's university prior to the commencement of the study.

Upon commencement of the study, the researcher sent an invitation letter to the target sample, which provided an explanation of how the study would benefit the individuals and site studied; as well as the future international students' academic and social experiences in American colleges in the United States. The study took place on campus in the same classroom for each interview session, over a time period of one semester consisting of sixteen weeks. Nine participants from the target sample took part in two one-on-one and face-to-face interviews that lasted approximately one hour. Each participant was asked to complete a participant consent form (see Appendix B) and a written participant form that included brief demographic information (see Appendix C).

The interview was open-ended which supported a “noninvasive stance by the researcher” (Creswell, 2012, p. 211). The open-ended questions elicited a textual description (i.e., what the participants experienced), and a structural description (i.e., how they experienced it in terms of the context). This created an overall essence of the experience (Creswell, 2013). During the initial interview, participants were asked the first five protocol questions based on experiences. The first interview was transcribed, then during the second interview, participants read through it and made any changes. A member check supported trustworthiness by letting the interviewee read it and add or omit information. The researcher listened to the recordings of the discussion several times, and then prepared and organized the data by transcribing the digital recording from the interview into text. Then the researcher analyzed the qualitative data gathered from the interviews to develop possible themes from the participants’ experiences.

Data analysis procedures. IPA is an approach used in phenomenology, which is the study of experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012). The researcher completed six steps following the IPA guidelines established by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2012) to analyze and interpret the qualitative data (see Figure 1).

In step one, the researcher listened to the digital recording while reading the transcript for the first time. The transcript was subsequently read many times to become acquainted with its contents to be able to extract patterns. In step two, the researcher underlined important parts of the text, and created initial descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments on the data. By looking at the language, lived experiences, and seeking abstract concepts, it garnered a more interpretive analysis of patterns of meaning (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012).

In the third step, the researcher used the transcript and initial notes to find connections and patterns by breaking the narrative flow of the interview into fragments. The emerging themes captured the essence of the participant's experience. Step four involved organizing themes by seeking connections across the themes. The researcher typed the list of themes and formed map clusters of related themes. Then, the clustered themes were represented in a table in Word, and the best quotations representing lived experiences were utilized.

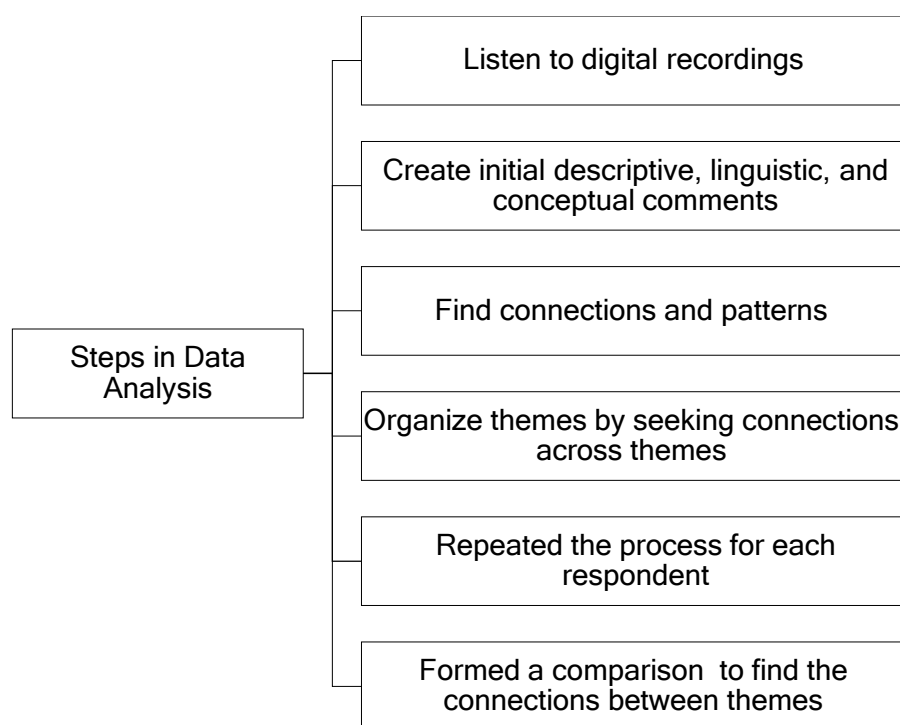


Figure 1. Steps in data analysis.

In step five, the researcher moved to the next participant's transcript, and repeated the process. In the final step, patterns were sought across all cases by viewing each table and forming a comparison to find the connections between the cases. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin contend the reconfiguring of themes augments the analysis to a higher

theoretical level. A master table of themes were created to depict connections for the group. Then, the findings and interpretation of the meaning of the findings were reported. Finally, the researcher validated the accuracy of the findings by completing a member check by the EAP coordinator who critically analyzed the findings and commented on them.

Ethical Considerations

Persuasion tactics to elicit participation in the study were not used, and participants could exit the study at any time. Respect and sensitivity to individuals and the populations being studied included but was not limited to (a) informing participants of the purpose of the study, (b) not using deceptive practices, (c) maintaining confidentiality, (d) using ethical interview practices, (e) sharing the role of the researcher, and (f) respecting the research site (Creswell, 2012). A field issue in using observations in research may be determining whether field notes are credible from a cultural perspective, and maintaining anonymity in the description of the setting. An ethical issue in research with international students could have been removing potential cultural bias from the role of the researcher. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), bias is any influence, condition, or set of conditions that independently or together distort the data. There may be potential differences in the ways ethical behavior is defined by the culture of the researcher and the research community versus the culture of the research participants. There are situations when cultural ethical norms may be contradictory among different cultures. Existing ethical guidelines may not provide sufficient guidance to help the researcher reconcile such conflicting perspectives.

The researcher used purposeful sampling; Leedy and Ormrod admonished that

any circumstance that disturbs the randomness by which the choice of the sample population was selected leads to bias. Final ethical considerations included securing participants' anonymity by assigning pseudonyms to the individuals and removing descriptors that would identify the college. All participant information was digitally stored on a password protected personal computer. Any paper data such as printed transcripts, researcher notes, and consent forms were transported in a locked briefcase from the interview to a locked file cabinet in my home office. Finally, all research materials were stored securely for the required period of three years, and at the end of this period, all records will be destroyed.

Trustworthiness

The researcher trusted the data due to member checking, a strategy used to validate the findings of the study. The interview protocol was reviewed by a panel of experts who reviewed and verified the questions. Participants were asked to read and check the transcripts, and have the opportunity to add or omit comments. Data was checked based upon the experts' review of the analysis. Finally, time at the study site and time spent interviewing the participants added to trustworthy data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Potential Research Bias

I am a doctoral student and a professor in the EAP department at the college where the study was conducted. I have been an EAP instructor for nine years and encountered EAP students of various cultural backgrounds with unique academic and social college experiences. I wanted to understand the international student experience in American colleges in order to help them build a rapport with faculty, staff, and other

student population with the hope of enhancing their academic and social experience.

I managed bias by keeping reflective journals and having experts look at the analysis. I shared the themes and outcomes to colleagues, and presented the findings to others at campus forums. By developing a rapport with the target population and employing active listening, the idea of self was facilitated as an instrument of inquiry (Piantanida & Garman, 2009). I remained neutral and objectively presented perspectives that may or may not have matched my own perspectives.

Chapter Summary

The phenomenological methodology for this chapter sought to answer the central research questions and successive research questions based upon international student academic and social experiences in addition to their motivation and barriers to attend an American college. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's 2012 method was used to conduct the study. A detailed overview of the participating international students of three different levels of the EAP program were included. The researcher reported and analyzed the responses of the individual international students. Since the participants were enrolled in the researcher's classes, there was a strict adherence to trustworthiness, potential bias and ethical consideration. In Chapter 4, the findings are presented to answer the research questions of this study. In Chapter 5, conclusions, discussions, and recommendations for future studies, and implications of the study are addressed.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

Higher education institutions are constantly challenged in understanding and responding to student diversity. As our global society becomes more interrelated, different world values and beliefs will be shared both within personal and professional settings. Zhou and Fischer (2013) contended cultural sensitivity in a global society “changes the function of the human brain, influencing the way people process information. The plasticity of the human brain and cognition continues for all of life, showing a sustained neuroplasticity that forms the basis of educability in human beings” (p. 227).

The trend of student globalization has increased the number of international students with unique needs and varying cross-cultural perspectives at American colleges. Cultural differences exist among international students, which influence learning styles, preferences, and student and teacher engagement. International students experience both linguistic and cultural adjustment issues during their academic career (Qiu, Lin, & Leung, 2013; Tananuraksakul & Hall, 2011), and it is important to gain a perspective of the academic and social cross-cultural experiences of international students at an American community college. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the academic and social experiences of students of international background enrolled in English for Academic Purposes at a 4-year public American college in Southeast Florida.

The intent of this study was to explore the phenomenon of the academic and social cross-cultural experiences of nine international students attending an American community-serving college and to glean emerging themes from the open-ended

conversations to apply to the proposed research questions. The cultural dimensions theory of Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) and an exhaustive review of literature were the criteria for the analysis of the interview data.

The study was guided by the central research question: What are international student experiences while attending an American college in south Florida? Sub-questions assisted the researcher in gaining additional information in order to understand the international students' experiences. What is the international students' academic experience at the American college? What is the international students' social experience at the American community college? What motivates or hinders international students to attend an American college?

Email invitations to participate in the study were sent to 25 students enrolled in four levels of an EAP program. Nine students agreed to participate and signed the consent form. All of the students were enrolled in EAP program and had an intermediate to high level of English language proficiency. Two face-to-face interviews were conducted with each participant on campus between August and September 2014. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the interview and then asked participants to review the contents to confirm accuracy. Quotations from interviews provide an idea of a person's attempts to make sense of his or her experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012), share stories, speak freely, and reflectively describe experiences (Moustakas 1994; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012). These quotes can be found in Tables 2-8.

Background of Participants

Students expressed linguistic, social, and cultural adjustment issues and claim a lack of language practice with people of the local culture heightens feelings of isolation.

In addition, the researcher compiled common themes of the study: academic experience and social experience. The interviewees included a sample of nine participants who were international students primarily from the three world regions: Russia, the Caribbean, and South America. There were six female and three male participants in this study (see Figure 1). Age frequencies were (a) mean 22.3; (b) median 20; (c) mode 20; and (d) range 19 to 31.

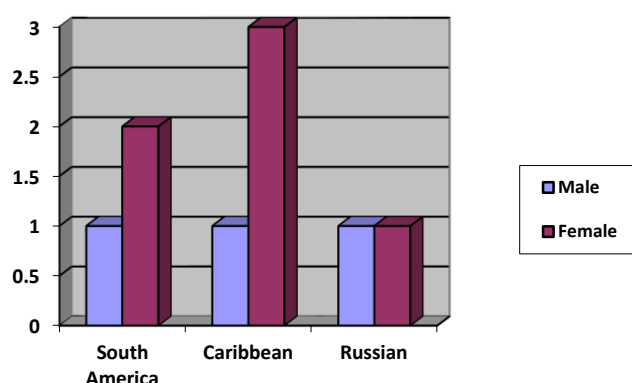


Figure 2. Gender Geographic Location.

The international students and the researcher met to discuss lived experiences at an American college. All interviewees returned a signed consent for participation in the research per International Review Board protocol and shared thoughts on the American college system.

ISP1 emigrated from Haiti seven years ago and attended middle school and high school in the United States. He speaks Haitian Creole and French at home. His first experience in an American school was in seventh grade. ISP2 is from the Dominican Republic and has been living in the United States for four years and three months, spending four years in an American public high school and the current semester at the

college. ISP3 is from Colombia and has been living in the United States for almost one year. ISP4 received a bachelor's degree from Russia and has been enrolled in the EAP program at the current college. She has been living in the United States for three years.

ISP5 moved from Venezuela nine months ago, but this is his second time living in the United States. The first time was at the age of eleven when he attended fifth grade at an American public elementary school.

ISP6 emigrated from Venezuela one year ago due to political tensions and for better educational and economic opportunities. She attended an American public high school for six months and is currently enrolled in the EAP program at the current institution. The decision to attend the current college was her parents. First, she plans to earn an associates in arts, then transfer to a university to study journalism and art. She prefers to transfer to an out-of-state university, but her mother is encouraging her to attend Florida International University. She hopes to one day get a master's degree in her field. ISP7 came to the United States from Russia six years ago because he saw opportunities here. He needed special skills for certain employment opportunities, so he commenced studying during his free time. ISP8 moved from Haiti to Chicago two years ago. One year ago, she moved to South Florida and has since attended the current college. She entered level three of the EAP program and reported that it has been a good experience. ISP9 emigrated from Cuba four years ago to achieve greater financial stability. ISP9 was currently enrolled in level two EAP classes. The demographics of all nine participants are further depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Study Participant Demographics

Name	EAP level	Reason for migration	Age	Years in United States	Gender	Country of origin	Highest degree
ISP1	4	Better life	20	7	Male	Haiti	High school
ISP2	4	Political	20	2	Female	Dominican Republic	High school
ISP3	3	Better education	20	1	Female	Colombia	High school
ISP4	4	Citizenship, Political	25	3	Female	Russia	Bachelors in Human Resources
ISP5	4	Political	19	9 months	Male	Venezuela	High school
ISP6	4	Better education, Political	20	4	Female	Venezuela	High school
ISP7	4	Economic	31	4	Male	Russia	Bachelors of Engineering
ISP8	3	Degree from the U.S.	19	2	Female	Haiti	High school
ISP9	2	Economic	27	4	Female	Cuba	High school

Note. EAP levels are based on Levels 1 through 4 for grammar/writing, reading, and speaking/listening; 4=high intermediate, 3=intermediate, 2=high beginning, 1=beginning. Students are placed into a Level 5 and/or 6 composition class based on the scores of the PERT upon completion of level 4 classes. Level 6= the highest level of linguistic proficiency and the last level before exiting the EAP program.

Themes of the Study

Themes of academic experience. Out of fourteen themes gathered by the international students, the following became a high frequency of themes: learning and studying, faculty perception, expedited learning and online supplement, and language and communication issues. These international students also compared their experiences in their home countries to summarize thoughts of their experiences in the host country. Although the interview protocol question did not pertain to experiences in their home country, they still drew a comparison between the two educational experiences. In America, these international students felt when faculty explained lessons and are receptive to students' needs, students gain the confidence and become more excited about the learning experience. An empathetic professor creates a warm, inviting, and safe environment where students are not fearful to ask questions or make mistakes.

Table 2 illustrates the common themes from all participants regarding the international students' academic experiences in an American college.

Table 2

Thematic Results Academic Experiences of International Students

Themes	ISP1	ISP2	ISP3	ISP4	ISP5	ISP6	ISP7	ISP8	ISP9
1. Tutoring and support	X	X			X			X	
2. Learning and studying	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
3. Role model	X								
4. Faculty explains lessons	X	X		X	X	X		X	

(table continues)

Table 2 (*table continued*)

Themes	ISP1	ISP2	ISP3	ISP4	ISP5	ISP6	ISP7	ISP8	ISP9
5. Lack of faculty interaction			X						
6. Likes school	X	X							X
7. Labs are a challenge	X								
8. Labs are helpful			X						
9. Costs for tuition	X		X	X	X				
10. Enrollment and advisement	X		X	X					
11. Academic dishonesty and cheating		X	X	X			X		
12. Language issues		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
13. Fast track and fast pace			X		X	X			X
14. Success and opportunities							X	X	

Note. ISP=International Student Participant

Learning and studying. Eight out of nine felt that learning and studying was important. ISP1 advises other students to come to class early, take notes, and record new vocabulary. He attributes his success to careful study and language practice. ISP1 suggested, “Foreigners should sign up for tutoring and programs on the computer.” Finally, ISP1 claimed that

in Haiti, it’s tough because some parents can’t afford things. Sometimes you have to pay for the uniforms, but over here how we live, we think it’s freedom. It’s not freedom over here, but I think it’s better than Haiti. If you wanna live, you gotta go work, you have to do it in order to be free or you will be living on the street. This country helps you, as long as you respect the law, then it’s a free country.

“There is no technology, so you have to come up with your own ideas and your own knowledge. In Haiti, there is not very much science, so I am inexperienced.” He explained his first exposure to technology was using the computer to access Google and YouTube. Watching movies with English subtitles helped in his English language acquisition.

ISP5 initially studied English at a for-profit institution of higher education upon his second return to the United States as an adult. This experience served as a *stepping stone* to an American university. “It was good, I learned many things but I wouldn’t go back. It was really slow and you have to take many classes. It was boring.” He believed people were learning English as a hobby or for travels and did not apply themselves appropriately. After six months, he selected the EAP program at the current college. ISP5 feels that although he is shy, he appreciates the opportunity to practice English.

I really like to study here. It is very different from Venezuela. The organization and the schools, for me, it is a wonderful experience. I chose this college because my cousin studied here. I was trying to transfer my credits to FIU, but they said it was better to go to a community college and then transfer the credits. The counselor told me this school was a really good option. Financially, it is cheaper here.

In drawing further comparisons between the systems of education, ISP2 felt there is greater academic rigor in the preparation of different disciplines, citing the example of programs. “A nurse from here is almost a doctor over there. Students are very prepared from here.” She explained that a diploma from an American institution of higher education “means something.”

Perception of faculty. Eight out of nine participants discussed their perception of faculty; they felt role-modeling was important, yet there was a lack of faculty interaction.

Seven out of eight had positive interaction with their faculty; however, one participant felt that there was a lack of interaction in the classroom. There was an increase in student response of good experiences with faculty, as very few students felt that there was a lack of faculty interaction. ISP8 contested, “Everyone has a special way to learn which needed more attention for particular students.”

With the ability to study at an American college, the participants felt they had a better learning experience. In addition, the students felt that the faculty in American colleges explain lessons more than their home country faculty. Some mentioned that in their home country, faculty just lecture, whereas at this college, the students felt they had more support when faculty explained lessons and listened to the student needs. Tutoring was another theme that emerged as the students felt they received additional instruction and help for lessons and lab requirements.

According to ISP4, there are lectures and seminars in Russia. An average of 100 people attend lectures, which she believes is the reason students cannot question or debate topics. The seminars are practice sessions where professors interrogate students on the content covered in past lectures. She added, “In Russia, only certain people are permitted to ask questions.” In America, the professors lecture less and provide students more opportunities to ask questions and give opinions. She prefers the American college system because students improve critical thinking skills. ISP4 claimed it was a great experience that she was “able to survive.” She indicated professors did not adapt for diverse learners, but “it is okay because there were only five or six foreign students.” She felt that the college prepared her.

I have experienced different styles of teaching like listening to professors, trying

to understand, and speaking in class. I have experienced different accents and now can have conversation with Americans. But it is difficult in Miami to find native Americans because there are so many Spanish and Russian people, you know. I have a toddler and a Russian husband, so the college is a different way for me to find a way to speak with native Americans without accents.

In a comparison of teaching styles between Colombia and the United States, ISP3 has observed that language constitutes the sole distinguishing factor. She opined effective teaching includes a careful explanation and review of assignments to help students feel more comfortable with the content. ISP1 also shared his initial experience with a teacher. “When I first came to school, one of the teachers spoke English, and in my head, I didn’t understand. I answered in French. There was a lady you could go to for help with homework, classwork, or anything.” In a comparison between his native and host country, ISP1 reported that teachers in Haiti want students to be quick. If the teacher explains something, they will make sure you understand it. ISP1 also confided an initial belief that professors do not like to help students and stressed, “College is much easier when teachers explain and try to help.” When further probed about his academic experience, he hesitated before continuing.

Some teachers give you hard time, but I do my work. Sometime if you tell a teacher you don’t understand, some teachers think when you say that you just want more . . . but I like when the teacher explains to me so I can do it myself. So some teachers just give it to you and tell you to go home and figure it out.

He explained, “I just accept, I don’t do nothing. I don’t fight back.”

ISP7 ascertained there is a different education system in Russia and the United States. In Russia, students must study subjects and attend classes. Without the knowledge, students cannot pass the class. He noted some people may not need to attend classes, but must have the knowledge. Lecture halls house 100 to 150 students who take

notes on the lecture, then study to pass the exam. ISP7 claimed

this system teaches students to value opportunities which comes with the lecture. If students need to make money, they can work to pay for bills and then catch it before the exam. There are no attendance policies. If there is enough knowledge, students can still pass. In America, attendance is mandatory and affects your grade. The American system makes your brain work only one way, too busy, sometimes too busy cannot study. Every human wants to study if he wants to be smarter. So this could kill the inspiration with focus on study, make a good grade and affects the hiring of a job in the future. If you are able to understand the subject you will understand and pass the exam if it does not affect the other life when you are not studying in college.

ISP2 mentioned that “instructors are the people that we have to follow, so they should be more of a professional person, too.” She felt that instructors exhibited a laissez-faire approach to students, permitting students to be too independent to make choices. ISP3 also admitted a lack of confidence in the interaction with her professors. She indicated her academic experience has been “great . . . but some professors are really hard to get to know. Like to talk to them, you don’t have confidence. But you need that, if you want to learn, to get to the top, maybe you have a question.” She explained that professors “need to be more flexible with students that makes the student feel like you’re not in a classroom learning, but that you’re a soldier.” She admonished, “We need to respect our professors, they are not our friends, but confidence with professors can help the student.”

ISP6 supports a strict system. But she added, “Here, you can talk to professors like they’re your friends. In Venezuela, you don’t do that. But just like school stuff and that’s it.” ISP5 also reported a great system that encourages self-improvement and personal development. He believes that American professors “demand more and they think of the students. I feel a big difference here, not only do they try to help improve

you as a student, but also as a person. In Venezuela, they don't really care. They give the lecture and that's it. I feel it is different here." ISP5 attended the University of Venezuela and claimed, "The university is even worse. Honestly, the professors there don't really care about you. Professors do not pay attention if you are texting or whatever." ISP5 further explained that in Venezuela, students have freedom to miss class, arrive late, text, play cards with friends, or even sleep in class. He was told this behavior is not condoned in America. ISP5 believed that technology distracts students in Venezuela, and students search for something online or are engaged in social media. He concluded that phones were not even permitted in EAP classes at the current college unless it is part of a lecture or a quick search.

Another challenge is the process. ISP6 explained, "When I started high school, I didn't know you had to go to your teacher. In Venezuela, your teacher goes to your classroom. Nobody told me. My first day in high school was lost. In Venezuela, there are private schools or public schools, but they're not that big, so when the bell rang, I wondered where everyone was going." She compared this experience to her college experience. She was surprised that her professors did not have seating charts, although she likes the freedom of selecting seats. In high school, she found it difficult to complete the mandatory community service. She also cited obtaining her high school diploma to be a challenge because she did not speak English and could not pass the FCAT. She passed the math section, but eventually took and passed the ACT. ISP6 declared the high school system to be easier in America than Venezuela; her schedule included four classes each quarter as opposed to seven or eight classes in Venezuela. ISP2 also compared secondary and postsecondary educational experiences. "College is way better than high

school. In high school, teachers do not prepare you enough. They just teach and don't prepare you for the next step."

I didn't went to college in Venezuela, but my friends told me Venezuela's really hard, it's kind of different from here. There is more time to do your work. In Venezuela, you don't have excuse to say I didn't get to do it. In Venezuela they give you like two days to do your work, and if you don't do it, you get zero. But here, they probably tell you it is okay, bring it tomorrow. It is more flexible than in Venezuela.

ISP6 feels that her academic experience has so far been successful and better than her high school experience. She explained that in her high school ESOL experience, students were not grouped according to skill level. "You're with a lot of people at different levels, but they're gonna teach the same thing. It's the same thing over again, every time you start a quarter in high school. Same thing, how people can be here for years?" ISP6 felt courses in the EAP program were challenging and helped her to learn.

ISP2 felt professors should treat students equally and should receive the same attention and education. She made several suggestions to improve the interaction between students and instructors of mixed backgrounds: (a) guest speakers in each class, (b) class skits, and (c) workshops for both students and instructors. She also mentioned that diversity in faculty does not mean faculty are more sensitive to students of mixed backgrounds. ISP2 felt discrimination was still prevalent even among diverse faculty.

I think it is a problem for international students and it won't help them to feel comfortable. I am not comfortable saying this, but most of the kids in the class are the same color as the instructor. You can see that. In one class, there's more Spanish people, in my other class, there's more Haitian and Jamaican.

She felt that her professor from Jamaica was more interested in the students who shared his cultural background.

ISP7 has met a lot of interesting students and professors and learned better

English skills. This is just one step of many needed; the main purpose is the acquisition of skills, not the diploma because

you spend 4 or 5 years headache time, and then you get degree. In Russia, people do not complete college if they do not feel it is right for them without feeling bad like Americans do. Here everything concentrates on money, if you don't study or work, you don't make money. In Russia, there is more freedom even if you don't study and work, you can focus on real thoughts and enjoy doing.

ISP7 was enrolled in level four of the EAP program and suspected he received academic support because "it was mandatory, otherwise they would be fired." He contended there were not many relationships between professors and students, which he considers valuable to students. "Every teacher has responsibility for students to be called teacher, not a worker who works because he/she will be fired . . . again losing job and money."

He believes

humans are mostly the same. The difference is personality. For some students, it has to be by schedule, ordinary and study, while other students, you can accept information given from your teacher given through the human relationship . . . like a teacher has to be a little psychologist, and putting everyone in the same group. A teacher is a master who can shape the diamond and make it brilliant and worthy using the right instruments, or break it.

ISP8 admonished that faculty from the EAP program have taught her a lot of skills. Her major accomplishment is the newly acquired reading ability. "Actually now, I can read and before I couldn't read anything." As long as students complete their assignments, "it is gonna be ok." She discussed the instructor-student relationships: "There was this teacher and she was a little bit weird like she tried to teach but could not." ISP8 explained that other students also had difficulties in her class. "I was not the only one, she doesn't try to understand the students. If I was her, I would listen and try to understand the student, I think she just doesn't care."

ISP8 divulged an interest in becoming a pediatrician. But because of language barriers and time constraints, she has opted on earning a degree in the nursing field. “I want to be a nurse, but I love children.” She plans to return to her country because there is a great need for medical professionals. She has not visited her country since emigrating from Haiti two years ago but looks forward to a return visit in one year.

Expedited learning and online supplement. Four out of nine interviewees discussed the importance of tutoring, having support, and fast-track courses. Independent tutoring also benefitted the students’ academic success rates. Participants felt labs were challenging yet helpful because the lab environment offered a different platform for learning from the traditional lecture hall. One participant experienced challenges completing the lab assignments.

Fast-track courses are designed as 5-week or 8-week courses. The participants admitted that although a 5-week or 8-week course quickens the time frame to complete three credits, they felt there was too much information in such a short period. Furthermore, students experienced difficulty completing the online lab co-requisite for the classes for the 5-week or 8-week courses. Students have the choice to take a course over a 16-week course, but not all classes have this time structure; the other courses are considered fast track. It should be noted that there is a college-wide initiative to offer a greater number of fast-track courses in an effort to increase student retention within the program and the college.

ISP8 ascertained the online lab requirement and teacher explanations helped her to understand the course content. She completed the lab work online but also sought help with the English language tutors at the academic resource center. When discussing the

evolution to online courses from blended or face-to-face courses, she professed a dislike for online instruction. “You really need someone to explain, pronounce, and correct pronunciation. It’s also easier to cheat. People have offered to pay me to do their work. Especially in my high school Spanish classes. High school students are lazy, even honor classes.” Although she prefers face-to-face instruction, she viewed the supplemental online lab course to be very helpful. She has taken two classes, both which are fast-track eight-week courses. “The classes are really good and the professors are really nice. The professors have shown me they really care.”

ISP3 considered the online supplemental lab co-requisite to be helpful for students, although students do not have the time necessary for completing the multitude of lab assignments. ISP3 also felt that the lab work did not correspond with the class coursework. She is a full-time student and does not have a job, but with all of the course work and lab assignments in the fast-track courses, she did not have time to go the academic resource center to seek help from the tutors. The design of the reading lab (i.e., time to read and understand each selection, understand the main idea, and complete the exercises) was not helpful. She hesitantly added that students sometimes find dishonest ways of completing the online lab assignments and admitted that she had witnessed several accounts of academic misconduct.

Once fully admitted to the college, ISP4 studied English in the English for Academic Purposes program. She utilized technological tools in her English language acquisition and cited several useful websites that provide language practice, podcasts and movies. ISP4 prefers blended classes with both face-to-face instruction and online instruction. ISP4 felt well-prepared for academic writing after taking the EAP classes.

She took fast-track courses but felt it was a mistake to take fast-track courses in reading. Her reading classes were comprised of native and foreign students. She speculated there are cultural differences in expectations for course content, citing reading as an example. ISP4 posited the reading rate for Americans is faster than the reading rate for Russians.

American students read 400 words per minute, but for Russians there is a different structure of work. You read every word completely. Russians generally read slower than Americans or British people and when I chose fast-track for reading, it was unpleasant surprise that an American student is able to read 300 words per minute easily. Especially since my professor loved to read aloud some tests and I was not able to understand completely. I had about ten minutes to read and answer questions so I rushed the whole time. I had to answer, but I don't know how! It was not enough. I have an unpleasant feeling the whole time and I don't like it.

In Russia, she was taught to read slowly in order to comprehend everything to be able to answer questions in detail. But in America, students are praised for their speed of reading and looking for an overall main idea.

ISP1 felt that although helpful, the lab requirement is a challenge. Currently, EAP students have lab requirements for the three classes within each level of the EAP program. The lab requirements include completion of a pre-skills test, all assigned lab course work and activities, and a post-test at the end of the term. The lab is a co-requisite to the instructor-led course. ISP1 spends approximately four hours each day completing lab work for one class totaling twelve hours, in addition to a full-time class schedule and accompanying class assignments. Even though he did not have other responsibilities like work or family, he admitted to not having time to complete all of the lab assignments

ISP3 has only taken fast-track courses, which are three credit courses offered during an 8-week period rather than the traditional 16-week course. She speculated that although the classes were good, the time frame was too fast. "I do not really like fast-

track courses, especially the reading classes. It is hard, but I didn't learn. I didn't take it as a class, like more something I had to do. I didn't enjoy it. I like to study, I love to study. I consider myself a good student. I like when I have time to study and learn.”

She suggested, “Maybe a solution could be find the main topics and teach those topics really well. Then the students understand better.” She admonished her best experience to be the class that “the professor explained everything, the purpose, and did more exercises.” She recommended, “If you are going to do the fast-track, become dedicated. You need to be able to study, and not just be in a hurry because it's not going to work. If you try and go fast, you're not gonna learn.” If given the choice between an 8-week or 16-week course, she would choose the 16-week classes.

ISP6 advises students to learn English by taking fast-track classes “because they go fast, it is the same thing, but you have more work to do in a short time.” ISP6 contended that instructors do not need to adapt teaching methods because “we are all different.” ISP9 also preferred the fast-track courses. “I like it because it is good and fast. But if you need to take your time because of work, it is good.” ISP9 likes the program at the current college because “it is fast. Three months is one year in my country.”

Academic honesty. Although these participants did not condone academic dishonesty based upon their cultural values, four out of nine participants had observed other students cheating on assignments and lab work, attributing this to the ease of cheating online. According to ISP7, people cheated in different ways to pass the exams, but if there were no restrictions on cheating, more people would cheat in America than in other countries, like his native country of Russia. ISP7 prefers the Russian system, but

could understand how people may benefit from a different system.

Language and communication issues. Seven out of nine felt language issues and issues with communication were key challenges experienced while having dialogue with American students as well as faculty, tutors, and enrollment counselors. Not only was communication an issue with enrollment and advisement, but three participants felt that they were not given the appropriate information for the courses, testing, and transcripts. When asked about challenges encountered, ISP2 quickly answered.

There is a lot of discrimination. In my biology class, I was afraid to speak. I have an accent, and there were native speakers. They would say that I was saying words wrong. I felt intimidated and some of the native speakers laughed at me or would say it is because I am Spanish.

Although she expressed unease with such experiences, she added, “I may speak English with an accent, but at least I can understand it and speak it.” ISP2 vehemently proclaimed a need for policy about respect. “I think even though it’s a good school, I think it needs to be a little more like no laughing at each other.” ISP5 reported that language and money have been the greatest challenges facing international students. ISP8 felt, “It is really different from my county, it is more difficult here because I am learning a new language.” ISP2 felt comforted since she could speak more than one language, which can lead to more opportunities. ISP2 wants to pursue a career in the medical field and believes there is a great need for bilingual medical professionals. She explained her rationale, “My dad understands English, but does not like to speak it. He has to know what doctors are saying to him.”

Admissions and enrollment. Three out of nine participants shared experiences with enrollment to the institution, and four out of nine participants believed the cost of

tuition represented a challenge since most of these international students (i.e., participants of the study) were unable to benefit from in-state tuition. It should be noted that some participants receive in-state tuition because they reside within the state, but other participants are international students who pay an international rate and are unable to benefit from in-state tuition. This becomes an issue as the students discuss amongst themselves many topics and concerns about the program, like this financial inequity. Based upon the themes under social experiences, international students remain more interconnected.

ISP8 mentioned that local students have more educational opportunities than international students because they understand the system. “The only thing we benefit, is the school that we go. I have looked for scholarships, but so far nothing.” She advises other international students, “Do the work, because it is expensive. If we leave our country, it's for a reason. If you are here to study, you have to do well. You came to this country to get better education, you have to do well.” ISP5 reported that money is a great challenge facing international students. He explained, “In my country, it's difficult to make dollars. For us, we have to pay the international fee. Here even the in-state fee is a lot of money.”

ISP4 selected the current college because it was “one of the top ten in the country if English is a second language.” ISP4 faced challenges when enrolling in the college.

My husband did not want to help me. If you live here, you do it yourself. You have to do everything by yourself. I spent a huge amount of time coming to campus and asking people questions. They did not understand me and I did not understand them completely. I heard over and over that my situation was not typical. That was my frustration. It was actually a challenge here.

ISP4 had a visa, but had to pay for the translation fees for her transcripts. She spent

nearly two months attempting to complete the initial application process and felt the decentralized campus impeded consistent communication and a timely response to questions. Since her husband is her sponsor, there were additional documents required, and she sighed, “They did not understand him and he did not understand them. I wasted a lot of time.”

ISP4 shared her experiences in both the American and Russian college systems. ISP4 claimed education in America is more difficult than in Russia. Russians are “lazy during the semester and then decide to study hard before the examinations.” She postulated one reason for student apathy is free education. Since the government pays for education, students are not invested in their studies.

In America, there is a lot of work to do for students by themselves. In Russia, there is work but we don’t do it. In Russia, our professors care more about questions in lectures; therefore there is no reason to bring books or other material but ourselves and do tests. Very little professors give us material to read. Examinations are only questions from lectures. Here, it is really different. Most of my knowledge was from my personal homework and some advice from my professors, lectures, and lab. In America, it is more casual. I also received help from the tutors. I was writing an essay and I came twice to lab. I never asked my husband for help because I came here to learn, not to get the answers. But he refused to help. Actually, I asked my mother-in-law to help me with an online test on articles, but I was right and she was wrong. I wanted to know her opinion, but I wanted to earn my own score. I want to know the rules. The funny thing is she is a translator. But she is a British translator, not American.

ISP5 attested that although international students needed paperwork (e.g., transcripts, identification, health insurance, financial stability), the enrollment process was relatively easy. He had a problem transferring his Certificate of Eligibility for Non-Immigrant Student Status and had to return to Venezuela to settle the issue. But he felt there was support from his international student advisor during this process. There was also an orientation for international students to advise students about the registration

process, necessary classes, and required number of credits. He quickly completed the placement tests and was placed into level four of the EAP program. “For me, it was a fast process. In Venezuela, it may take three months to sign up and take the placement tests. Then you have to wait two more months to get the results before you can register. It is too long.”

ISP9 explained, “When I first come here, I know nothing. Now more.” She registered for the college because she wants to earn a bachelor’s degree in criminology from a university, which will provide greater opportunities in the future. ISP3 confessed of dreams of attending college in America, and her initial thoughts on the American college system were that “it’s perfect.” When questioned why she enrolled in the current college, she said, “I was looking for the best college that I could afford. A friend told me this was the best college in Broward.” ISP1 recalled his initial decision for enrolling at the college.

My mom went to a college closer to my house, but I did not want to go there because they control everything you do and switch your classes quickly. They move too fast. I have a friend that I knew in Haiti, we went to preschool together. He recommended that I go to this school, so one day I came, took a test, and signed up.

Another impetus for attending college is to be a positive role model for his younger brother. ISP1 plans to receive an associate’s degree then transfer to an out-of-state university. He vows he will continue his education because he does not want to join the army in Haiti, like most of his cousins.

In a subsequent interview, ISP1 reported being misplaced in the EAP program because his entrance test scores were low.

I rushed taking the exam because I needed to catch the bus. I did not even take

time on the test. I just came to take it but I did not know if I really needed it. I did not realize the test was important. When I saw the score, they gave me the yellow paper which placed me in EAP Level 2. It was only then I realized the test was really important. So that is why I ended up here.

ISP1 spent one year in the EAP program before an instructor recommended academic advising for reassessment of placement within the program. When asked about his time spent in the EAP program, he said, “I had one teacher . . . I was the only one who understood what she was talking about. She would just let me go early and told me to try to get home safe.” ISP1 will not be required to complete the EAP program and take the exit exam. He will commence mainstream college classes next semester.

ISP2 believed it is a good system.

It helps you improve your education, and there’s a lot of help financially. In my country, there are not many opportunities to study. If you do not have money, you do not get proper education, like in this country. In America, there are more opportunities for a student to grow. Here you feel secure in this school. Students have protection and security.

She admonished that things do not change in the Dominican Republic as it is not an easy lifestyle. “Over there, people do not worry about education. They worry about who is going to steal your stuff.” However, she shared feelings of loneliness and isolation on campus, stemming from what she believes is the emphasis on independence. She clarified, “I like to help people and be involved, but people here just go to class and do not get involved.” In the Dominican Republic, there is a strong sense of community where people help one another. She felt there was a lack of support when navigating the American system and felt uncertain about the admission process at the college. “When I went to my orientation here, I thought it was to be more like face-to-face. But the orientation was a big class about general stuff about the college. It was not one-on-one

and I did not feel comfortable talking in a big group.” She had expected a counselor to make an individual assessment of a chartered course in college. Instead, the orientation was about

drug tests and college procedures. For my class, I got the wrong class. I should not have been placed here. I think remedial reading is fine, I don’t speak English perfect, but they are holding me back. I need to take these two classes. Nobody told me that before I enrolled. They said it is mandatory. They told me because of my score. I want to study part time, but it will take a lot longer now. I’m losing my time. I’m wasting my time. If I am good at something, I can finish it faster. In my country, you can do it as fast as you can if you can handle it. Nobody asked me if I did high school here, but the lady saw it. She told me even though I had a great GPA, I have to take the test.

Finally, ISP2 felt that there was not enough personalized staff support in the admissions and registration process.

ISP5 considers Venezuela home but appreciates the choices and security the United States offers. He concluded, “Part of my soul is there. My brother is still there. We are looking for a scholarship because he’s a soccer player. We are trying.” He would advise other international students to take advantage of the open-access policy at the current college. “Even if you don’t make the perfect scores, you will be admitted. Eventually, you will become more confident. There are better options here.” He believes a degree from the United States is valued globally.

Themes of social experience. From the social perspective, seven out of nine participants felt that social life does exist on campus; however, students interacted with those who share the same cultural background. Although two out of nine students felt there was a lack of interaction with American students, it was still a motivator when developing a friendship and overcoming the language barriers. One of the motivators of the language barrier was learning English outside of the classroom. Language is learned

not only in the classroom; fluency can be developed when language learners have social interaction with native speakers. Students are able to apply speaking and listening skills in a real-world environment while forming new friendships. Technological resources pave another method for interaction; students are able to send and receive messages with less spoken language barriers when texting or emailing; the electronic mode of communication can improve reading and grammar skills by providing time to derive meaning from the words and to respond. It can also lessen the challenges of one's accent.

Table 3 illustrates the common themes from all participants regarding the international students' social experiences in an American college.

Table 3

Thematic Results Social Experiences of International Students

Themes	ISP1	ISP2	ISP3	ISP4	ISP5	ISP6	ISP7	ISP8	ISP9
1. Social life exists	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
2. Social life is good			X		X	X	X	X	
3. Social life is a challenge	X	X							
4. No social life with local students	X	X							
5. Social life with international students	X			X	X	X			X
6. Respect and community exists between students	X	X							

Note. ISP=International Student Participant

(table continues)

Table 3 (*table continued*)

Themes	ISP1	ISP2	ISP3	ISP4	ISP5	ISP6	ISP7	ISP8	ISP9
7. Issues with communication	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
8. Good clubs and programs	X	X						X	
9. Issues with organizations and clubs				X					

Note. ISP=International Student Participant

Socialization. Currently, ISP5 is enrolled in his first semester and hopes to make new contacts and new friends in his three classes.

I honestly meet so many people, I don't care if they are American, Native American, Latin American. It's a good experience to meet all people around the world. You can learn a little bit of Japanese, Russian, and that is a good experience. In my last class, we had twelve Venezuelans, so there was not a lot of cultural exchange. But in another class, there was one Japanese and one French. Actually, I learned very good French. It was really fun. I like those kind of experiences.

ISP2 reported a lack of social opportunities in America. "Here, students are alone, doing their own stuff. In the Dominican Republic, people try to study but also socialize." She explained that she does not have any friends yet because "everyone is focused on their stuff and do not care about the rest." Even though the professors encourage interaction among classmates, she claimed that students "do not really care about the other person." ISP1 draws a comparison between this institution and his cousin's out-of-state university. "I like this school, but I never see people in the hallways or just hanging out. My cousin lives in a dormitory. People hang out. Life is busy, and people have a social life there. I like that."

ISP1 described a lack of social interaction with local students, but developed friendships with other students of international background within the EAP program. Additionally, he has maintained close connections with friends and family members from his native country who attend the same college. He explained that he likes to help other students, but “if a student doesn’t speak English, at least they have to try.” He feels connected to other students within the EAP program “as long as they initially respect you.” He recalled meeting a classmate from the EAP program.

I don’t give up. I met a friend and she did not speak English, she spoke Spanish. I would always use Google translate from Spanish into English. That’s how we communicated. And finally, she understood more English. I told her she should speak English. Like my accent, I have a big accent. If I am talking to a friend on the phone who does not understand what I am saying, I text the word instead of saying the word, so he can understand.

ISP9 feels that she has formed friendships with other Spanish speakers enrolled in the EAP program. “I try to speak English, but it is more of a problem. Here, I don’t speak on cell phone with people. People hang up on me. But when I speak face-to-face, everything good.” Because there is an abundance of Spanish speakers in the various departments, she has had no problems communicating her needs. She advises other students to interact with students from other countries, which can provide a cultural education. ISP6 has formed friendships with people from other cultures, but most friends are South American “obviously because we have almost the similar culture. But I have Haitian friends, Chinese friends, and all that.” She believes that this setting encourages students to be more social because of the diversity of cultures. ISP8 added that cultural differences exist; in fact, “In every country, you hardly find anyone who can be exactly like you.” ISP6 also has American friends, but communicates mostly in Spanish. She

did not have cultural or linguistic problems in high school and recounted tales of the patience of English speaking classmates. She reported similar experiences at the current college. “In my EAP classes, we’re from different countries. Now that I’m taking psychology and wellness, yeah. I have friends, American friends.” The greatest challenge is the inability communicating with “somebody else that is not from your country.”

Language and communication. Seven out of nine participants concluded there are issues with communication. ISP3 admonished her greatest challenge is practicing English. ISP3 considered her social experiences “good” but wished for more English speakers in the college, and “when you have friends, it hard not to speak your language.” She confirmed that there were limited opportunities to exchange language and culture since “90% of the class is Latin boys and Latin girls. I do not have a friendship with anyone from here.” She described herself as shy and nervous while speaking English, but if there were more opportunities to meet native people, she would try her best. “English is my passion, but it’s hard to learn. It is impossible to practice English. There’s a lot of Latin people in my house.” ISP8 expressed comfort with classmates and felt other students in the EAP program were “very friendly. I have many friends. I have some Spanish friends, but I speak English. Even with my family, I speak English because I wanna learn.” She reasoned, “I’m better at it, so my friends use me as a tutor.”

Student life. Four out of nine students shared experiences with campus social opportunities. Three of the four felt good clubs, organization, and programs existed, but there was not enough advocacy. ISP2 felt that college “is not just academic, it’s the development of the whole person. A club for someone like me would be great. If I found

a club for international students, I would be very happy.”

ISP8 is involved in campus activities and attends campus films, activities, and clubs. She is currently applying for membership in the honor society by completing an online application. Upon approval, she will receive a shirt and be trained as a leader. In addition, she was the first place recipient in a college-wide writing competition. Her prize was six in-state credit hours at the current institution. ISP1 also agreed that there are good programs, clubs, and activities on campus, which are important for students. Although there are a lot of opportunities, he has been unable to become involved because he relies on public transportation, which affects his availability. He is waiting to join the soccer team until he has more time. “I like to manage myself on time, so by catching buses, I don’t wanna have trouble with the coach, teacher, and the players.” He explained that sometimes there is a problem arriving to class on time because of his dependency on public transportation.

ISP4 felt there was discrimination based upon their country of origin and language barriers. ISP4 stated Americans do not tolerate mistakes. She attempted to join a language exchange club, but members never called her after the first meeting because they “simply do not want Russians.” On campus, she tried to join a language club, but the club disintegrated due to a lack of native student interest. International students had limited interaction with the American students. Even though there was a slight age difference between the nine participants, age was also a factor in developing friendships with other students.

ISP4 felt that even though there was opportunity to meet people of other cultures, she believed students remained in linguistically and/or culturally similar groups. “I had

the opportunity, but it is common to group with similar people especially for people who do not speak well in English.” She also believed that her age played a factor in finding people with similar interests. “There are a lot of teenagers in my classes and they have different interests. Their interests are finding the difference between Samsung and Apple. In Russia, I speak of kids, jobs, education, and politics.”

When asked what she would advise to another international student, ISP4 responded, “It depends on their wealth. Do not allow your husband to put your head in the ocean. In other words, if you need someone to help, make the first step.” She reiterated that her main challenge was initial enrollment. “After I was finally enrolled, it was not really cultural shock or education shock. Maybe it is *culture surprise*, but not shock.” She has learned more about her native culture from observing peers at the college. One example of *culture surprise* was the idea that nobody cheated. “Nobody cheated when I took tests, even if there was an empty room with no supervisor.” She considered cheating to be a cultural norm in Russia. She explained that Russians are “masters at cheating” by sharing answers and/or using textbooks during exams. Another example of a *culture surprise* was that Russians do not follow rules.

So this case is not American *culture surprise*. That’s why I am ashamed. You know it is kind of cultural misunderstanding for people for they complain all the time that cultural rules do not work, but they break all the rules all the time. Unless you yourself do not follow them I saw why Americans, British, Europeans sometimes think Russian like barbarians.

The last cited *culture surprise* was the art of answering salutations correctly. She explained when people ask *how you are*, Russians answer honestly and in great detail. But Americans utilize this question as a form of greeting without expectations of receiving an honest answer.

In conclusion, ISP8 admitted, “Sometimes, people do mistakes and some on purpose, if not, you would either have to be a robot or a clown.” But new experiences are important. He defined a successful student as someone who is happy while studying and living. ISP8 concludes, “Success means doing what you love, not only being present and doing what you think you have to do.”

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented the data and findings of the research questions as well as the phenomenological approach to gather themes of lived experiences of international students while attending an American college. Tables 4-6 displayed common themes from each independent international student regarding the Central Research Question and Research Questions 1 through 3.

Table 4

International Students’ General Statements of Experiences at an American College (ISP1 to ISP3)

Participants 1 to 3	Students’ statements
<i>International Student Participant 1</i>	College is much easier when faculty tries to help Tutoring programs are helpful Lack of social interaction with local students Close-knit community amongst international students Lab requirements are a challenge
<i>International Student Participant 2</i>	A good system helps you improve your education Lack of support when navigating the American system Lack of student involvement (feelings of isolation and loneliness) School is just not academic; it’s the development of the whole person Lack of social opportunities Lack of friendships with local students; impossible to practice English

(table continues)

Table 4 (*table continued*)

Participants 1 to 3	Students' statements
<i>International Student Participant 3</i>	
	Professors need to spend more time with students
	Fast track courses are overwhelming
	Online labs are helpful, but there is dishonesty when completing assignments
	Limited opportunities to exchange language and culture
	Lack of friendships with local students; impossible to practice English

Table 5

International Students' General Statements of Experiences at an American College (ISP4 to ISP6)

Participants 4 to 6	Students' statements
<i>International Student Participant 4</i>	
	Technological tools aided in English language acquisition
	Recommended blended classes with face-to-face and online instruction
	Professors do not adapt to diverse learning styles
	Helpful tutoring programs
	Some clubs discriminated against people from different countries
	Initial enrollment was a challenge
<i>International Student Participant 5</i>	
	A great open access system that encourages self-improvement and personal development
	Professors demand more and expect more from the students
	A relatively easy enrollment process
	Support from the international student advisor
	Language and money has been the greatest challenge
<i>International Student Participant 6</i>	
	Academic experience has been successful
	The EAP program is challenging and the fast track course have helped to learn English
	The setting encourages students to be more social because of diverse cultures
	Formed friendships with people from other cultures
	The greatest challenge is the inability to communicate with individuals not from the same country

Table 6

International Students' General Statements of Experiences at an American College (ISP7 to ISP9)

Participants 7 to 9	Students' statements
<i>International Student Participant 7</i>	
	Relationships are valuable to students, but there are not enough relationships between professors and students
	Cultural differences exist and it is difficult to find commonalities
	A successful student is someone who is happy while studying and living
	The American system uses busy work, which stifles inspiration
	People cheat in different ways to pass exams
	The acquisition of skills is more important than the diploma
<i>International Student Participant 8</i>	
	Local students have more opportunities than international students
	Professors need to listen and understand their students
	Professors' explanations help students understand the content
	English tutors were essential for success with online lab work
	EAP students form a close community and agree that learning English is difficult
<i>International Student Participant 9</i>	
	The EAP program is good because it is fast
	Speaking English is a problem, but speaking face-to-face with people is easier than using a phone
	It is easier to form friendships with other Spanish-speaking students than with English-speaking students
	Other students should interact with students from other countries

Tables 7 and 8 demonstrated common academic and social themes based on motivators and/or challenges amongst the participants at an American college. In Table 7, the following topics were high-frequency motivator topics: learning and studying and the existence of social life. Mid-frequency topics included the existence of social life among EAP students, faculty explanation of lessons, and tutoring and support. The scale for themes gathered from the international social experiences were low=1-3 participants,

mid=4-6, and high 7-9.

Table 7

Thematic Results Motivators of International Students

Themes	ISP1	ISP2	ISP3	ISP4	ISP5	ISP6	ISP7	ISP8	ISP9
1. Tutoring and support	X	X			X			X	
2. Learning and studying	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
3. Faculty explanation of lessons	X	X		X	X	X		X	
4. Social life exists	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
5. Social life exists among EAP students	X			X	X	X			X

Note. ISP=International Student Participant

Table 8 illustrates the common themes from all participants regarding the challenges of international students at an American college. In Table 8, high-frequency topics were language and communication issues. The cost of tuition was a mid-frequency topic. There were low-frequency topics: lack of faculty interaction, challenging labs, enrollment and advisement, and lack of social life with local students. The scale for themes gathered from the international social experiences were low=1-3 participants, mid=4-6, and high 7-9.

Although there was a low frequency of the other topics, this does not mean that the other students did not experience this on a larger scale. In addition, some of these issues might not have been as important to the participants. This will be discussed in Chapter 5 under limitations and recommendations for future research. In Chapter 5, the findings in relationship to the research questions in Chapter 2 will be addressed.

Implications of the findings, limitations and delimitations of the study, anticipated outcomes, recommendations for future research studies, and the conclusion of this phenomenological approach of international students will be provided.

Table 8

Thematic Results Challenges of International Students

Themes	ISP1	ISP2	ISP3	ISP4	ISP5	ISP6	ISP7	ISP8	ISP9
1. Lack of faculty interaction			X						
2. Labs are a challenge	X								
3. Cost of tuition	X		X	X	X				
4. Enrollment and advisement	X		X	X					
5. Language issues		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
6. Issues with communication	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
7. No social life with local students	X	X							

Note. ISP=International Student Participant

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Study

This chapter presents a summary of the study, along with the anticipated outcomes and the implications of the findings. The chapter is also divided into the following major sections: limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, recommendations for future research studies, and a conclusion. A deeper insight into the essence of the international student experience was gained through this research.

There is a great impact of diversity in higher education. Trends in enrollment suggest that there is not only an increase in enrollment, but those ethnic minorities comprise the majority of this increase. There are approximately 991 public, 180 independent, and 31 tribal community colleges in the United States with a total enrollment of 11.6 million students. Forty-six percent of all United States undergraduate students attend community colleges. Altbach, Gumport, and Berdahl (2011) predicted that although national enrollment in higher education is currently one-third minority, by 2050 it is estimated to be a majority minority. There are higher education needs of individuals from a wide range of diverse backgrounds (Broward College, 2014b). Smith (2011) cautioned against looking singly at race, class, and gender; rather look at the interaction of various groups.

Anticipated Outcomes

The anticipated outcome of the study will assist the college in many areas to understand international students both academically and socially. Stakeholders who benefit from the study are administration, faculty, student services, student life support, and campus clubs, organizations and athletics. Although many themes were found

between the international students, they also commented on the relationship between the host and home country. The comparisons between host and home country were not discussed as it was not the focus of the study. This could be an implication for future research.

The researcher expected students to have barriers with online learning, problems with enrollment and financial aid requirements, and negative perceptions of faculty engagement. The researcher did not expect the participants to exhibit such enthusiasm for classes and faculty, applauding the opportunities available within the American system when compared to their native country. Because of the three different geographical regions of the participants, there was a discrepancy between the frequency of themes.

Although a theme had a low frequency of one to three responses out of nine, it remains an important topic for stakeholders to understand so that it can be applied within the college setting. For example, a low frequency was transportation in a county with unreliable public transportation: There is more time travelling with less time studying, as well as constraints finding available classes to coincide with existing bus schedules and routes. Other low-frequency themes which were found in the academic and social experiences of the international student were issues with clubs and organizations as well as a challenging social life and a lack of social interaction with local students. Students mentioned role models and the labs being helpful but challenging. Additionally, communication and respect within the group as well as success and opportunities available at an American college were found to be categorized as low-frequency themes. Based on the students' statements, these themes were still of great importance, especially

those related to interaction with local and/or nonnative students.

Limitations of the Study

Phenomenology reports what and how participants have experienced a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Looking at one school is limiting and does not reflect the entire group of international students. The researcher did not conduct a focus group nor conduct the interviews in the participants' native languages. The interviews were conducted in English, which is the shared language that all of the participants speak. Interviews not done in one's native language could limit the type and thoroughness of the responses when there is a limited understanding of questions in a nonnative language. Based upon a phenomenological study, the researcher was limited to the protocol questions and probing in contrast to asking direct questions. The protocol questions were also limiting based upon reliability and validity. This relates back to the formative and summative committees and pilot group who provided feedback on the instrument. These individuals were not of equal distribution of the actual nine participants.

Finally, the researcher was the interviewer and did not share same culture as the participants. This study is limited to the population of international students from other countries. In this particular study, the population was derived from three specific geographical areas to include South America, the Caribbean, and Russia. There are limitations to conducting the interviews via Internet since many international students either do not have access to a computer, Internet connection, and/or have limited technological prowess, which could limit the number of participants willing to take part in the study.

Within the interview protocol, the researcher had to stay consistent with all

questions among the nine participants. Although probing was utilized as a process for this phenomenological study, there were no direct questions asked of the participants. After analyzing all of the data in Chapter 4, there were many themes that had high, medium, and low frequency. A limitation to this study is the inability to conduct continued dialogues via subsequent interviews with the international students to expand upon the themes of low frequency. These points that were covered in Chapter 4 illustrated in Tables 2-8 provide potential areas for future research.

Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations are components of the research based on several key points. The researcher chose not to go to every class based on the amount of scheduled courses; currently, there are over 100 courses per semester. The college has three main campuses and five satellite campuses county-wide offering the same curriculum, but the researcher opted to only conduct the study at one campus within three EAP classes (i.e., Levels 2, 3, and 4). As a result, this study was limited to the south campus of the college. Another delimitation was time management of the study. The researcher felt that visiting these main and satellite campuses would have been too time consuming and difficult finding an interview location on campus to hold a confidential conversation between the researcher and participant. The researcher also wished to interview a greater population of international students at various EAP levels. Because of the phenomenological approach, interviews were also time consuming based upon the duration of the interview and time necessary to extract lived experiences, complete transcriptions, and conduct member checking. Based upon the population at the college, there are many diverse groups and subgroups who represent various regions throughout the world. The researcher chose not

to utilize one select group and selected the first nine respondents who fit this criteria; however, the nine international students were from three different regions, which does provide a full representation of international students college-wide.

Implications of the Findings

The purpose of the remainder of Chapter 5 is to discuss implications based upon the results of the international student responses. The next section will deal primarily with the central research question and the sub research questions. The following research questions will be addressed.

Central research question. What are international student experiences while attending an American college in South Florida?

The following sub research questions assisted the researcher in gaining additional information in order to understand the international students' experiences.

Research Question 1. What is the international students' academic experience at the American college?

Research Question 2. What is the international students' social experience at the American college?

Research Question 3. What motivates or hinders international students to attend an American college?

The researcher used the central research question at the core of this study to explore the international student experiences at an American college. Participants had varying levels of responses regarding their experiences both academically and socially within an American college. Answers varied depending on the length of experiences and lived experiences from different geographical regions. Although the majority of the

international students indicated that certain experiences were more important than others, the experiences were still important to their success at an American college.

The participants felt that having faculty explain lessons was beneficial for learning and studying. Six of the nine participants felt that faculty explained lessons, but one also felt there was a lack of interaction with the faculty. Although a faculty member can still transfer knowledge in a lecture format and not have one-on-one interaction, it is perceived from some participants that they value the personal humanistic approach. It should be noted that six students had separate instruction (i.e., EAP levels) with a different faculty member from the one student who was enrolled in a separate class. The participants indicated that the rapport between their professors was a positive experience because they felt it was a more student-centered environment as compared to the one participant who was in a separate class. This participant felt the professor provided minimal guidance. A nurturing and collaborative environment, along with one-on-one interaction, are instructional behaviors that help students succeed. The careful balance of instructional time management, classroom management, andragogical approaches, and philosophies positively impact student learning.

Formerly, students had to adjust to the institution to succeed, but as student populations have become more diverse, institutions have changed the strategies for teaching and learning (Kuh, 2007). Programs and services using new creative approaches are more likely to be effective in creating student success (Williams, 2002). Some of the efforts and strategies related to student success have included (a) partnering with faculty to foster student success, (b) providing advising to help students to become independent learners, (c) implementing educational experiences involving career development, (d)

educational planning and e-tutoring, (e) creating on-line student orientation programs, and (f) using technology through student response centers. Student learning through the development and implementation of service-learning courses like traditional volunteer service, linked learning communities, and transformational study service projects also engage students.

Motivation is important when addressing hard-to-reach students as well as the already motivated students. Some students seem enthusiastic about learning, but many need their teachers to inspire, challenge, and stimulate them. If a teacher understands the advantages and disadvantages of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, they can use strategies to create a positive learning experience. Many ways to reach students include praising students, removing competition, establishing procedures in the classroom, and allowing students to design their own set of rules, all within reasonable parameters of what the teacher might have designed. Recognition, achievement, and growth are characteristics of satisfiers when motivating people, compared to dissatisfiers in a classroom setting that span classroom policies, procedures, and faculty expectations (Herzberg, Mausner, & Bloch Snyderman, 1959).

Motivation varies based on culture, societal norms, and political and economic settings. Culture and context play a vital role in how students participate and acquire knowledge (Merrifield, 2012). Merrifield (2012) examined the social, economic, and political factors that influence motivation and learning. Past life experiences (e.g., parental education, prior learning experience), current life situations (e.g., age, gender), and social and historical contexts (e.g., ethnicity, social class, family demands, surrounding community, work environments) create motivators and barriers. Confidence

was a factor in increased engagement, involvement in team work, communication, and productivity. Intrinsic motivators relate to learning and self-improvement, while intrinsic demotivators relate to cultural and attitudinal barriers.

Depending upon how a teacher structures the curriculum by understanding instructional strategies or teaching engaging lessons, they can help motivate students. For example, a teacher can use specific types of media or technology to get students interested in the subject matter and convey certain expectations for the students. Also, when students find particular subject matter important, useful, and interesting, it affects their perceptions of values in other areas and motivates them to learn in that area as well. Teachers should give prompt feedback, avoid demeaning comments, and reward success. Prompt feedback allows students to comprehend, apply, and synthesize the skills necessary for current and future learning objectives, tasks, and assignments. Student learning could be optimized if all faculty adhered to this strategy. Furthermore, feedback is important in the learning process, and equally important is how to provide positive criticism, not condescending remarks that could be detrimental to student confidence, teacher-student rapport, and future learning experiences. Criticism should point out errors but also provide suggestions for improvement in current and future assignments.

Although seven out of nine participants felt there were language issues, students still felt engaged in learning. Whether the experiences were academic or social, the researcher was able to determine areas of concern: language and communication. These areas of concern were a challenge; however, the researcher concluded that there were other areas that were more motivating for the international student experience at an American college. The researcher believes that improvements can be made in certain

areas and students should be encouraged to participate in the myriad of services that are offered to all students (e.g., tutoring, library resources, labs, student life activities, clubs). The implications of the study provide credibility to the thought if students participate in academic and social activities, they can improve their success rate both professionally and socially at the college. Hutto (2002) described seven vectors from the conceptual model of Chickering's psychological development theory. Vector Four explains that relationship experiences aid in the shaping of the students. Themes of this stage include increased tolerance and/or respect for diverse ethnicities, race, values and habits. This implies that if there is a greater interaction of values, beliefs, and background, people are able to learn and accept diverse norms and cultures, thus removing barriers and increasing intercultural competency. This is important not only within the international students, but also for interaction between the international and local students.

The following points to be discussed are the low-frequency themes from all nine participants. In any type of research, there are common themes between the participants; although some themes are individually mentioned, it does not negate the importance of an individual theme. The researcher was limited by the amount of participants in this qualitative study. If the researcher had the time and access to a larger international student population, then the amount of these low-frequency reports could have more support. Issues with clubs and organizations, a challenging social life and social interaction with local students, role models, and communication and respect within the group, as well success and opportunities were low-frequency themes. Some of the additional low-frequency themes expressed were lab assignments, transportation, and academic integrity.

One participant experienced challenges in completing lab assignments. Another participant discussed transportation challenges when living far from campus. Since he did not own a car, he had to rely on an unreliable and costly bus system. Transportation could indirectly affect student success if students depend on inconsistent schedules that do not meet the needs of the students. The time spent waiting and in transit lessens the time spent studying or meeting with peers or faculty. The bus schedules may not coincide with classes offered or faculty office hours. The stress of catching the bus or waiting for arrivals and departures could also play a role. Also, transportation schedules may limit students' ability to participate in school functions.

Although academic honesty was individually mentioned in the themes, it is an increased concern for all stakeholders in institutions of higher education. Furthermore, from a faculty standpoint within a multicultural setting, different values influence students' self-perception, behavior, and relationship to peers and teachers. The notion of academic integrity is culturally, religiously, politically, and socially derived and has different meanings to people from varied cultures. International students contribute to American institutions of higher education; consequently, institutions are responsible for minimizing academic integrity cultural barriers (Smithee, 2009). International students may not share the same perspective of what constitutes academic dishonesty in the United States. Strategies should be utilized to help international students understand and comply with the American standards of academic integrity (Gillespie, 2012). But also in the prevalent globalized setting of academic institutions, faculty, staff, and students need to explore personal levels of intercultural competence in order to understand responses to cheating (Smithee, 2009).

Recommendations for Future Research Studies

This researcher recommends more in-depth investigation for a comparative analysis of language learning in traditional classes versus online learning (e.g., hybrid instruction, online tutoring and labs, virtual conferences, MOOCs, fully online classes). These international students expressed preferences for face-to-face classes, but still value the online component for learning. Eighty-five percent of web pages are in English; Ahangar and Izadi (2015) postulated this aids English language learners learn vocabulary while surfing and text processing. In their study, it was found the experimental group of Internet users scored significantly higher on vocabulary tests than the non-Internet users, the control group. Ahangar and Izadi concluded technology and online engagement (e.g., online games, programs) are helpful for both teachers and students and improve language learning, reading, writing, communication, and cooperative learning. Additionally, it is becoming more important to know how to use online resources and services. It was concluded curriculum planners and instructors should utilize technology for authentic communicative situations for a learner-centered setting.

Technology provides innovative methods for teaching and learning as well as solutions for learning resources. Social media is relevant in education and devices like iPhones, iPads, and android devices are also being utilized as a mode for teaching and learning. YouTube is a tool that can enhance learning and motivate students to learn. By using YouTube, students can improve listening skills, cultural competencies, and prepares students for using such platforms for future computer-mediated communication (Alwehaibi, 2015). Technology can be a reference and a mode of communication and collaboration.

The successful implementation of technology also depends on the teacher's attitudes, integration, and utilization in the teaching process (Abukhattala, 2016).

Abukhattala (2016) conducted a qualitative study to explore English language teachers' attitudes and beliefs of technology. The three themes emerged from the study: (a) understanding technology, (b) types of technology, and (c) cultural and traditional styles of learning and teaching. In this study, a lack of funding, technology and training were issues for the faculty and impacted the level of technology use within the classroom. During the in-depth interviews with educators, it was revealed that the content and the method of instruction were ultimately controlled by the educators, not the policy-makers.

Technology has modified the teaching roles from being teacher-centered to learner-centered, using a facilitative approach rather than an authoritarian one. Integrating technology into the language curriculum increases student motivation, can bring gaming into the classroom, and stimulate engagement. Furthermore, CALL can change students' learning attitudes and improve self-confidence. Abukhattala (2016) also found that technology allows learners to monitor their progress, which may motivate learners to complete work, and educators are able to assess more objectively. The international students in this current study also expressed satisfaction in their ability to self-monitor progress in online labs and classes. Students who prefer face-to-face classes still value the online component because they use Internet for research, applications, and social communication and collaboration with peers.

One issue that the participants mentioned was the balance between face-to-face and online learning and the technological experiences of faculty. A recommendation for future studies would be an exploration of the untraditional student and their experiences

in online learning. This exploration should also include how faculty do or do not utilize technology in the classroom in all types of instruction (e.g., face-to-face, blended, or fully online).

Another recommendation for future studies would be the generation gap and technology usage within the classroom setting (i.e., face-to-face, blended, fully online). There are more generations in today's educational settings than ever before, which have the possibility to create challenges. Generational designation categories include (a) Generation Y (born in or after 1982), (b) Generation X (born between 1965 and 1981), (c) Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), and (d) Traditionalists (born prior to 1946). Baby Boomers are seen as valuing collaboration and aiming to maintain a somewhat formal and moderately paced climate (Reynolds, Bush, & Campbell, 2008). Baby Boomers prefer face-to-face interaction but are open to using online tools and resources (Reynolds et al., 2008). Generation X is thought to be motivated by autonomy and flexibility (Lancaster & Stillman, 2005). Generation Y is said to value fast-paced, technological interactions and instantaneous feedback (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007).

The three generations did not express significant differences in the extent to which they valued technology/communication even though there is a common misperception among the groups is that the older generations are resistant to technology. Lester, Standifer, Schultz, and Windsor (2012) found that all generations understand the value of technology. Additionally, more traditional forms of communication (e.g., face to face) did not reveal a significant actual difference.

Realigning andragogical philosophy, retraining, and utilizing a new skillset to

meet the needs of a changing student population is especially important. Furthermore, faculty may not fully understand or apply proper use of technology, and there may not be a transfer of knowledge from faculty retreats, workshops, in-service training, and other professional development forums to upgrade a technology skill set and student learning styles. Faculty need to include higher level thought in their curriculum by engaging and challenging their students with critical thinking as well as the use of technology. When designing appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessments, a faculty member should understand the complex ways their students construct their own language learning environment in which technology plays a crucial role. Furthermore, administration must create educational initiatives to meet the needs of the changing student body, and faculty perception and intercultural sensitivity need to be a foundation for curriculum and program development.

Svinicki and McKeachie (2011) admonished that appreciating the unique needs and characteristics of students will improve student learning, and responsiveness to culturally diverse students will enhance the classroom environment, which is particularly crucial within the English for Academic Purposes program. Cross-cultural studies in education investigate the influence of culture on individual learning styles, and how learning differences exist between individuals based on a cultural context. Student learning styles and preferences vary in higher education and among different cultures.

A final recommendation for future research is the role of how the diversity of faculty (e.g., culture, gender, values, beliefs, cognitive processes) impacts student learning. As our society becomes more interrelated, different world values and beliefs will be shared both within personal and professional settings. Harris (2010) claimed,

“Separation between science and human values is an illusion, and actually quite a dangerous one” (1:01). Harris further noted facts and values do not necessarily belong to different realms. Neuroethics may help to understand behaviors and moral decisions to interpret culturally established norms and behaviors. From an educator’s standpoint within a multicultural setting, the different values influence students’ self-perception and relationship to peers and teachers. Zhou and Fischer (2013) contended cultural sensitivity in a global society “changes the function of the human brain, influencing the way people process information. The plasticity of the human brain and cognition continues for all of life, showing a sustained neuroplasticity that forms the basis of educability in human beings” (p. 227).

Zhou and Fischer (2013) found cultural and educational styles affect brain development, resulting in differences in the cortex; for example, Western cultures independently reason and problem-solve, whereas Eastern cultures memorize and learn collectively. Western cultures, such as the United States, emphasize individualism that values the individual more than family, friends, and other groups and engages in self-promotion and self-effacement (Jackson & Wang, 2013). Members of Western cultures tend to have more friends but looser connections. Members of Eastern cultures tend to have fewer but closer friendships (Wang & Leichtmann, 2000). Culture also plays a role in student achievement. Achievement-oriented cultures are motivated by completing tasks, whereas relationship-focused cultures stress the importance of relationships and networks. It was found that Western cultures had a greater need for achievement, relationships, and power than those from the Eastern culture. Western cultures displayed a need for relationships (Moberg, 2011).

Similar to linguistic code switching, Zhou and Fischer (2013) postulated that people living within a multicultural environment respond to cultural cues and are able to switch between different cultures. Science provides the facts, but the merging and creation of a new value and belief systems represent ethical behaviors from various cultures. Culture changes brains (Harris, 2013); however, science cannot predict human behavior based on a value system that is being redefined within a global society. Although neuroscience demonstrates various brain developments, such as people with bicultural systems with two neural representations, neuroscience cannot predict the level of behavior modification and creation of a new judgement system.

There are great implications for neuroscience to be applied within education, forming greater understanding of cultural and linguistic differences. Within a review of 28 educational neuroscience articles, Zocchi and Pollack (2013) found five prevalent categories: (a) the scientific investigation, (b) prediction, (c) neuromanipulation, (d) social considerations, and (e) philosophical considerations but found that brain-based justification to be an area of neuroscience education rather than neuroethics. Jebari (2014) contended that technologies could enhance our morality by using three strategies: behavioral enhancement, emotional enhancement, and empathy and inequity aversion. Technology could provide a greater cultural understanding necessary of an emerging global society.

Conclusion

American colleges could do more for an inclusive college environment. For example, faculty, administrators, and staff could develop and enhance their competencies around the issue of diversity. Participants of the study felt that more comfortable and

engaged when an instructor demonstrates cultural competency. It will become necessary to increase cultural competencies through diversity initiatives both within the curriculum and throughout the college by better understanding students' perceptions and including those from various backgrounds, cultures, genders, and religions to work collaboratively towards common objectives. Institutions of higher education will need to provide students with the necessary tools to succeed in the college-level courses. Higher education institutions are constantly challenged in understanding and responding to student diversity. Educators need to engage in activities geared towards diversity and/or multiculturalism at a professional and individual level (Schuh, Jones, Harper, & Associates, 2011).

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Appendix A

EAP Testing and Placement

EAP Testing and Placement

Who Must Take an English Proficiency Placement Test (Levels of English Proficiency or LOEP)?

- Degree-seeking students who do not meet criteria for exemption from placement testing.
- Students whose native/official language is other than English and who did not complete two (2) years of regular high school English in the United States or who earned a GED in Spanish.
- Students who took a Broward College approved English Proficiency placement test more than one year ago and whose scores were not used for placement decisions.
- Students who took a Broward College approved English Proficiency placement test more than one year ago, whose scores were used for placement decisions, but who have not registered for classes for one year or more.
- Students who have expired SAT, ACT, TOEFL or IELTS scores

Why Must Students With Limited English Proficiency Take the English Proficiency Placement Test?

- The LOEP and required placement essay are used to assess students' English language skills for placement into appropriate EAP courses that will prepare them for the English language requirements of college level courses.
- The LOEP and required placement essay may also be used to exempt students from EAP courses if students demonstrate proficiency by meeting minimum thresholds. Students who meet the thresholds will take the PERT for placement into appropriate courses.

LOEP cut-off scores:

- Listening Skills is 101 + ○ Reading Skills is 114+
- Writing: Based on Evaluation of Writing Sample

How Can Students Demonstrate College -Level English Language Proficiency?

- Successfully complete EAP coursework through level 4 and meet minimum thresholds on the PERT Reading and Writing.
- Successfully complete EAP coursework through level 6.
- Present official TOEFL or IELTS (academic module) scores that meet minimum thresholds and meet the minimum thresholds on the PERT. Broward College cutoff scores:
 - TOEFL is 79-120

- IELTS is 6.5-9.0
- ACT is 17+ in English and 22+ in Reading
- SAT is 440+ in Critical Reading for Reading and Writing Placement

Students who score either 79-120 on the TOEFL or 6.5-9.0 on the IELTS are eligible to take the PERT.

Students who score 17+ in English and 22+ in Reading on the ACT or 440+ in Critical Reading on the SAT are eligible to register for ENC1101.

- Provide official documentation of earned GED in English and meet the minimum thresholds on the PERT with the same cut scores as non-Limited English Proficiency Students.
- Earned college level course work at a C level or better that demonstrates English proficiency.

Appendix B

Consent Form for Participation in the Research

Consent Form for Participation in the Research Study Entitled
A Phenomenological Study of the International Student Experience at an American
College

Funding Source: None.

IRB protocol #

Principal investigator
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What is the study about?

The intent of this study is to explore the social and academic experiences of international students in American colleges. The problem to be addressed by the proposed study is to examine the unique needs, learning styles and preferences, and varying cross-cultural perspectives to gain an understanding of the international student. The purpose of the study is to explore the experience of students of international backgrounds enrolled in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at an American community college in Southeast Florida.

Why are you asking me?

We are inviting you to participate because you are currently a student enrolled in the EAP program at the research site. There will be five participants in this research study.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in the study?

You will be part of two one-on-one in-depth interviews that should last no more than one hour each. The results from memoing and interviews will be analyzed, interpreted, and returned to the EAP coordinator to check for validity in the accuracy of the findings. The results will be incorporated by the investigator into the dissertation. If, during the study, the investigator learns that you no longer meet the inclusion criteria of the study and you become ineligible for the study, Mrs. Julie Anderson Exposito will terminate your participation.

What are the dangers to me?

Risks to you are minimal, meaning they are not thought to be greater than other risks you experience every day. All information derived from the interview will be held in strict

confidence. Reports, professional papers, publications; and other documents developed from the study will not contain any information about specific individuals. If you have questions about the research or your research rights, please contact Mrs. Julie Anderson Exposito at (305) 742-8775. You may also contact the IRB with questions about your research rights.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

Your participation will be a voice for other international students in America, and will provide information of the international student experience, which will enable the development of future programs that could benefit international students' academic process in institutions of higher education.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information private?

Data collection will be stored in a locked cabinet that is only accessible by the principal investigator. It will not contain identification information about the participants such as names and contact information. The anonymity of participants will be ensured by assigning pseudonyms to the individuals and removing descriptors that would identify the college. Information will be destroyed 36 months after the study ends. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The IRB, regulatory agencies, or Dr. David B. Ross may review research records.

What if I do not want to participate or I want to leave the study?

You have the right to leave this study at any time or refuse to participate. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to participate, you will not experience any penalty or loss of services that you have a right to receive. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you before the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as a part of the research.

Other Considerations:

If the researchers learn anything which might change your mind about being involved, you will be told of this information.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing below, you indicate that

- this study has been explained to you
- you have read this document or it has been read to you
- your questions about this research study have been answered
- you have been told that you may ask the researchers any study-related questions in the future
- you have been told that you may ask the Institutional Review Board (IRB) personal questions about your study rights

- you are entitled to a copy of this form after you have read and signed it
- you voluntarily agree to participate in the study entitled A Phenomenological Study of the International Student Experience at an American College

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Participant Information

Dear Participants,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my doctoral research on the experience of the international student of international background enrolled in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at an American community college. I would like to include a short piece of biographic information on each potential research participant in my dissertation. To protect your privacy, your names will not be used in the research. I would be grateful if you would provide me with the following information:

Country of origin

Prior educational experience in your home country

Educational experience in host country

Degree(s) attained

Number of years in the United States

Reason for migration

Age

Any other information you would like to share.

I am available to answer any questions you may have. I can be reached at (305) 742-8775 or jexposit@broward.edu.

Sincerely,

Julie Anderson Exposito, MS

Appendix D

Interview Guideline

Interview Guideline

Topic: Experience of international students studying at an American community college in South Florida.

Interview Protocol Questions:

1. Would you please take a little time to share your personal thoughts of the American college system?
2. How would you describe your academic experience at an American college?
3. How would you describe your social experience at an American college?
4. What are some of the factors that motivate you to attend an American college?
5. Can you talk about your experiences with the challenges you encounter as an international student at an American college?
6. Based on your personal experiences, if you were going to give advice to another international student, what would you say?
7. Is there anything that I did not ask you that you would like to share with me?

Appendix E

English for Academic Purposes Flowchart

NAME: _____

TERM: _____



ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP)

